United Nations A/CN.10/PV.218

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

218th Meeting
Friday, 27 March 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Garcia . . . . . (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I declare open the resumed organizational session and the 218th meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission is convened today for a brief meeting to deal with organizational matters related to the 1998 substantive session, including the election of the Bureau for 1998, the appointment of the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission — the Working Groups — and the adoption of the provisional agenda for the forthcoming substantive session.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn now to the draft provisional agenda for the substantive session, which is contained in document A/CN.10/L.42. As members can see, it is basically the same as the draft provisional agenda that was considered by member States at the December meeting of the organizational session.

As there are no comments, may I take it that the Commission decides to adopt the provisional agenda contained in document A/CN.10/L.42?

It was so decided.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have been informed by the coordinator of the Group of Eastern European States that the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Mr. Sergei Martynov, has been endorsed by that group for the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 1998 substantive session.

We all know Mr. Martynov as an accomplished diplomat and an experienced disarmament hand. Those of us who have had the opportunity to work with him during General Assembly sessions know Mr. Martynov's sterling qualities and will have fond memories of working with him on many occasions in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

As there is no objection, may I take it that the Disarmament Commission elects Mr. Sergei Martynov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, as Chairman for the 1998 substantive session by acclamation?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me on behalf of the Disarmament Commission to congratulate Mr. Martynov on his election and to ask Ambassador Sychou of Belarus to convey our greetings to him. I believe I speak for the entire Commission in wishing Mr. Martynov success in the tasks ahead of him, and in offering our complete cooperation ensuring the successful outcome of the Commission's deliberations.

I should like further to inform members that the Group of Eastern European States has nominated Mr. Vice Skračić, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations, to the post of Rapporteur for the 1998 substantive session.

98-85166 (E)

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As there is no objection, may I take it that members decide to elect Mr. Vice Skračić as Rapporteur for the 1998 substantive session?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the members of the Commission, I congratulate Mr. Skračić on his election and assure him of the full cooperation of all his fellow officers and of all members of the Commission.

As members know, in conformity with established practice, each regional group designates two candidates for vice-chairmanships of the Commission. Two regional groups have selected candidates for these posts.

I am informed by the coordinator of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean States that the group has endorsed the candidatures of Mr. Emilio Izquierdo of Ecuador and Mr. Fernando Guillén of Peru for vice-chairmanships of the Commission.

I have also been informed by the coordinator of the Group of Western European and other States that that group has decided to endorse the candidature of Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland for a vice-chairmanship.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to elect those three representatives as Vice-Chairmen of the Disarmament Commission for its 1998 substantive session?

It was so decided.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Disarmament Commission, I warmly congratulate Mr. Emilio Izquierdo of Ecuador, Mr. Fernando Guillén of Peru and Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland on their election as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission. They are all distinguished diplomats whom we in the Commission know very well. We are happy that they are joining our Bureau.

It is my understanding that consultations are still under way in the regional groups with regard to their candidates for the remaining vice-chairmanships.

Besides the remaining Vice-Chairmen, the Commission must also nominate and elect the Chairmen of the three Working Groups. It is important that this be done as quickly as possible so that the Commission will be able smoothly to begin its substantive deliberations, and I hope that the regional groups will proceed with due urgency.

Programme of work and timetable

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members have before them document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.1, prepared by the Secretariat and setting out the general programme of work. This document shows the meeting rooms that have been set aside for the Commission, and also the meetings that have been scheduled for the subsidiary bodies. We will not take any action on this document today.

Members also have before them three informal papers prepared by the Secretariat which contain proposals for the timetables of meetings. In this connection, I would like to point out that the date 1997 appears in the upper left-hand corner of informal paper No. 3, when, in fact, it should say 1998. Please excuse us for this mistake.

These informal papers will be the subject of consultations with delegations and will be revised at the end of each week's work. We will make the necessary changes in accordance with those consultations held by the Chairman and bearing in mind the requirements of the subsidiary bodies, the Working Groups.

We have thus concluded our work for today regarding the election of the Chairman and other members of the Bureau, and I have also made this brief introduction regarding the proposed programme of work.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to give the floor to delegations for comments.

Mr. Souliotis (Greece) (*interpretation from French*): It is a pleasure to see you, Sir, once again chairing the work of our Commission. On behalf of my delegation, I would first like to thank the newly elected Vice-Chairmen, and I would also like to thank you for having distributed this documentation to us.

My delegation notes with regret that Friday, 17 April, is not going to be a holiday. In fact, this is the most solemn holy day for us and for millions of other Orthodox Christians. For this reason, this date should be borne in mind by the Secretariat in drawing up the timetable for our work. Of course, we do not have the right or the intention to object to the decision taken —

namely, to have a meeting on 17 April — but we hope that this will not set a precedent for the future.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Commission and the Secretariat take note of these comments.

Mr. Spirin (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First, I would like, on behalf of my delegation, to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the efficient and vigorous manner in which you have conducted the work of the Commission. At the same time, I would like to support what has been said by the representative of Greece, who has drawn the Secretariat's and the Bureau's attention to the need to bear in mind the wishes of Orthodox Christians in preparing the Commission's timetable of work, and who has urged that, to the extent possible, Commission meetings not be planned for Friday, 17 April, it being an important holy day for quite a few Russian Orthodox Christians. On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to express the hope that, in further discussions regarding the preparation of the Commission's timetable, the Secretariat will bear in mind this wish expressed by my delegation and that of Greece.

Mr. Laptsenak (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): Like others at today's meeting who participate on a permanent basis in the work of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to welcome you, Mr. Chairman, and to thank you for the very productive and effective efforts you have made throughout the period leading up to this meeting, thereby ensuring that the Commission's work will be productive. I would also like to assure all delegations that Belarus will do everything in its power to see that this constructive and efficient spirit prevails throughout our work at the Commission's substantive session this year.

On behalf of Mr. Martynov, I would like to thank the members of the Group of Eastern European States for having supported his candidacy and also all delegations here today for electing him by acclamation. I am certain that Mr. Martynov will be able personally to express his gratitude to members here as soon as he arrives. He plans to arrive in New York at the beginning of April — on 5 April, approximately. As soon as he arrives, he will begin close and intensive consultations with the members of the regional groups, with a view to resolving problems related to the formation of the Bureau of the substantive session and the timetable of work. I would expect that he will take note of the comments and wishes already expressed by the representatives of Greece and the Russian Federation as regards working out the details for the substantive session this year.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): If there are no further requests to speak, once again I wish to express our satisfaction at the election of Mr. Martynov as Chairman of the Commission for the substantive session of 1998; the election of Ambassador Fernando Guillén of Peru to one of the vice-chairmanships; the election of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Emilio Izquierdo, to another of the vice-chairmanships; the election of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland, Michael Hoey, to another vice-chairmanship; and the election of Mr. Vice Skračić as Rapporteur of our Commission.

Allow me once again to urge the regional groups to speed up their consultations and to submit their nominations still pending for vice-chairmanships and working-group chairmanships as quickly as possible.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.219

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

219th Meeting
Monday, 6 April 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 1998 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset I would like to most sincerely thank all the members of the Disarmament Commission for having elected me Chairman. In so doing they have conferred on me a singular honour and privilege. I would like also to express my gratitude to the members of the Eastern European Regional Group for nominating me and, in particular to the delegation of Slovakia for its constructive attitude.

Coming to the Disarmament Commission is, for me, very much like a homecoming, and I hope that with the support and understanding of Commission members, it will be, if not a sweet homecoming, then at least an enjoyable one. I shall rely again on the Commission's understanding, active participation and support in discharging my responsibilities.

Let me also express special appreciation to my predecessor in this post, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, for his outstanding and invaluable contribution as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

Before we take up the first order of the day, allow me on behalf of all members of the Commission to extend the most cordial and warm welcome to Mr. Jin Yongjian, Under-Secretary-General for the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, which is responsible for servicing the Disarmament Commission; Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, whose Department will provide substantive support to the session of the Commission; and Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. The presence of these high United Nations officials and internationally respected diplomats once again underlines the importance of the Disarmament Commission in general and the high expectations of Member States for this session in particular. For this show of support we are thankful to them.

In addition, I cannot but commend the Secretariat staff, and in particular the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Alasaniya, for the preliminary work they have done, the appropriate documentation they have prepared and their consistent commitment to the work of the Commission.

In past decades, the international community lived through periods of confrontation and a spiralling arms race. Yet its wisdom and accumulated experience helped mankind halt that trend and reconsider the past, thereby approaching the third millennium with considerable achievements in the area of disarmament and security. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their

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Destruction were signed, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was extended for an indefinite term — all of this in the last two years alone. The number of States joining these important international instruments is growing steadily.

I should like to welcome today in particular an event which, as I understand it, took place concomitantly — and I hope not by mere accident — with the opening of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. This morning, according to the information I have received, the delegations of the United Kingdom and France deposited with the Secretary-General their ratification instruments on joining the CTBT.

The Commission has before it a number of topical disarmament issues. This year, which marks the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, the subject of creating nuclear-weapon-free zones is becoming increasingly relevant. The progress achieved lately in developing and observing agreements on such zones demonstrates vividly the international community's desire to establish and strengthen the nuclear-weapons non-proliferation regime. There is indeed clear evidence of this in the very fact that six resolutions dealing with this subject have already been adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Along with the traditional nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the South Pacific, new regional initiatives are emerging, their potential undoubtedly far from being exhausted.

Despite certain differences in approaches to the objectives, the agenda and the timing for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), the Commission can take heart from the shared need, as the third millennium looms, to take stock of the achievements and the failures and to work out recommendations for the future. I would rely on the wisdom and flexibility of all delegations in working out solutions by consensus to the aspects which still need to be agreed upon. I urge delegations, in working on this issue, to be cognizant of the fact that it is the third year that this item is being considered and that the Commission has to report it out.

The importance of elaborating "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N" cannot be overemphasized. The acute problems related to conventional arms are omnipresent and clearly affect international security and disarmament. In providing guidelines for the international community on the subject, the Commission will, in a substantive way, increase the contribution it has already made through working out guidelines on confidence-building measures and arms transfers.

The activities of the Disarmament Commission are of great significance at this decisive juncture. The Commission has a unique and undiminished role to play as a universal international body that allows an in-depth search for solutions to problems in the area of disarmament while relying on the widest possible participation by States and their synergetic wisdom. At the same time, the Commission has before it, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, a challenge to revitalize, rationalize and streamline its work. I hope a general understanding among the Member States will emerge on how we approach this goal.

I am convinced that the decisions that will be worked out and adopted at this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will bring the international community one step closer to building the secure world it deserves.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: As members of the Commission may recall, at the organizational session, the provisional agenda which is now before the Commission was considered and approved. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the provisional agenda contained in document A/CN.10/L.42.

The provisional agenda was adopted.

Organization of work

The Chairman: At its organizational session, the Commission considered a series of organizational matters which included the provisional agenda, a Bureau for the 1998 session, the establishment of three Working Groups on three substantive agenda items, the appointment of Chairmen of the Working Groups and a decision on the date and duration of the 1998 substantive session.

In this regard, the Commission has elected Ecuador, Ireland and Peru as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission

and Mr. Vice Skračić of Croatia as Rapporteur for the 1998 session.

The Chairman and the Bureau are now continuing consultations to fill the remaining vacancies in the Bureau and among the chairmanships of the subsidiary bodies. I would take this opportunity to urge the regional Groups and their coordinators to be as prompt as possible in submitting their proposals on behalf of their respective Groups in order to finish this part of our important business. I expect us to have finished with this by the morning of Wednesday, 8 April.

I wish to inform the members of the Commission that, as a result of intensive consultations among Groups, we have a nomination from a regional Group. In this connection, I call on the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Vinhas (Portugal): My delegation, as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States, would like to inform the Commission that the Group has endorsed the candidature of Mr. Miguel Aguirre de Cárcer of the Spanish delegation to the post of Chairman of Working Group I on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Chairman: I thank the Group of Western European and other States for this nomination. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to elect Mr. Miguel Aguirre de Cárcer of Spain as Chairman of Working Group I.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to extend my warmest congratulations to the newly elected member of the chairmanship of the working bodies, Mr. Aguirre de Cárcer, on his election.

I would like to discuss now the general programme of work for the current session, which is before the Commission in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.1. The programme of work is an indicative timetable for the work of the Commission, subject to further adjustment, as necessary. With regard to the working timetable, the Secretariat has prepared and distributed the preliminary timetable for all three weeks of the work of the Commission. These three informal papers are also indicative. However, the first week's timetable will remain unchanged. As far as the second and third weeks are concerned, these two informal papers will be decided upon by the Bureau in consultation with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. Subsequently, the Secretariat will reissue these papers with necessary changes, if any.

As to the allocation of time for each agenda item, the principle of equal footing and flexibility for practical purposes will be observed. As I have noted before, the weekly timetable and programme of work will take into account the needs of each subsidiary body through consultations with the Chairmen of the Working Groups. Since, however, items 4 and 6 are in their second year of consideration, and every effort will have to be made to conclude item 5 on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which is in its third and final year, one might expect that this Working Group could require more meetings. Should this become evident, the Group will, of course, be given every consideration and cooperation to accommodate its busy schedule.

As members may notice, in document A/CN.10/1998/CRP.1, containing the general programme of work, four meetings have been allocated to the general exchange of views. I would like to ask delegations wishing to make statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat as soon as possible. The deadline for inscription on the list is 6 p.m. today. I am also informed that 25 copies of statements should be provided to the Secretariat.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to proceed in this manner.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: In order to utilize efficiently the available conference resources, I would like to appeal to all members of the Disarmament Commission to be punctual in attending all scheduled meetings of the Commission.

Regarding documentation for the current session, I wish to point out that last year's report of the Disarmament Commission to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, contained in document A/52/42, as well as documents listed in the report, will serve as important background documents for this session.

Previous reports of the Commission will, of course, also be useful for reference, especially with regard to the consideration of the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In the course of deliberations on various agenda items,

particularly items 4 and 6, which are in their second year of consideration, the Commission might expect a number of new documents to be submitted by delegations. I would urge those delegations to submit their working papers to the Secretariat as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for processing.

As has been the case in previous years, non-governmental organizations are welcome to attend the plenary meetings and meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Disarmament Commission as observers.

General exchange of views

Mr. Yamaguchi (Japan): Let me express my gratitude for being the first speaker in this series of general statements at this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I sincerely hope that, through our deliberations, we can add something meaningful to the achievements that we have witnessed in disarmament in various frameworks — bilateral, regional and multilateral. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that you will have my delegation's full support and cooperation for the successful outcome of this session.

Allow me to state my delegation's views on the three topics of this year's session. I will begin with the guidelines on conventional arms control and disarmament.

In the disarmament community, we have recently heard many remarks about small arms and light weapons. Indeed, these weapons are being used as primary instruments of violence, causing a large number of casualties. The easy availability of such weapons has led to their accumulation, which in itself is of a destabilizing nature.

We have also witnessed an attempt to try to tackle the issue of small arms and light weapons in a comprehensive manner. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/70 B of 1995, a Panel of Governmental Experts was established and chaired by Ambassador Donowaki of Japan, and the results of their study were submitted to the General Assembly last year.

The report contains two groups of recommendations. The first group concerns measures to reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons in specific regions of the world where conflicts are taking or have taken place. In this context, the Panel found the approach initiated by the United Nations in Mali and the surrounding West African nations significant. It is also noteworthy that the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) established a special task force on conflict, peace and development cooperation in 1995 and has been formulating guidelines on conflict, peace and development cooperation since 1996.

In this connection, my delegation welcomes the international conference on sustainable disarmament for sustainable development scheduled to be held in Brussels in October within the framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD.

In one of its recommendations the Panel emphasizes the importance of developing guidelines for United Nations peacekeeping operations in their activities for post-conflict demobilization, with particular emphasis on collecting and disposing of small arms and light weapons. My country places the highest priority on this recommendation, and I would like to come back to it in the discussion in Working Group III.

The second group of recommendations concerns the prevention of future accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons. In this context, the Panel found that the guidelines for international arms transfers adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1996 were excellent, and revision or improvement was not deemed necessary.

Last year, as a follow-up to this Panel report, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/38 J. Again, it requested that the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, prepare a report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We are told that the members of this new group will be appointed shortly. In order to facilitate their work, Japan will host a workshop this year.

Other specific efforts are also under way in various forums. An international conference on the moratorium on small-arms transfers in West Africa was held in Norway this April. Also relevant is the training seminar initiated by Germany and scheduled for June of this year, which focuses on Central Africa and emphasizes the importance of trainers in peace-building through practical disarmament measures.

All in all, these manifestations of concern are bound to drive the issues of small arms, light weapons and practical disarmament further up in our disarmament agenda. The Disarmament Commission has already made

some contributions in this respect and will rightly continue to do so. These efforts in various forums are not mutually exclusive, but naturally need to be coordinated in such a way as to achieve the utmost benefit.

Let me now turn to the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The development of nuclear-weapon-free zones reflects aspirations expressed regionally towards the ultimate global elimination of nuclear weapons. A nuclear-weapon-free zone can also be a vehicle to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation as well as to provide security assurances of a legally binding nature to non-nuclear-weapon States of the region concerned. At last year's session of the Disarmament Commission, many countries, including Japan, expressed their thoughts concerning the criteria for the establishment of an effective nuclear-weapon-free zone. We believe that those criteria are highly important for future consideration of such zones. As indicated in our working paper, the following four criteria are essential in order for a nuclear-weapon-free zone to be effective.

First, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be supported by all countries concerned, including the nuclear-weapon States. Secondly, the zone should in no way jeopardize the peace and safety of the region concerned or of the world as a whole. Thirdly, appropriate safeguard measures, including inspection and verification measures, should be established in the zone. And fourthly, the zone should be established in conformity with the principles of international law, including that of free navigation on the high seas. It is with these criteria in mind that my country supports the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Regarding the issue of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, General Assembly resolution 52/38 F states, in effect, that subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda, the Assembly will convene a fourth special session devoted to disarmament. It maintains that the exact date and further organizational matters relating to the convening of the special session are subject to the outcome of the deliberations at this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. The idea of having a special session of the General Assembly dedicated to the cause of disarmament seems to be appealing to many delegations, particularly since mankind has recently beheld the end of the cold war and will soon witness the unfolding of a new millennium.

The recent achievements and developments in disarmament, if put in a long-term perspective, are something to be commended. Remarkable progress is under way in the reduction of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was extended indefinitely in 1995, with the collateral introduction of a mechanism to encourage further nuclear disarmament. Last April witnessed the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization is currently working. We are aware that a special session could catalyse further disarmament developments if we reach a common understanding as to its timing, purpose and agenda. In trying to establish such a common understanding, it is imperative to forge an agreement between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States. We also have to take into account the fact that a fourth special session devoted to disarmament would have huge financial implications.

In concluding my statement, let me touch briefly on the rationalization of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We welcome the initiative taken by the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, to take a fresh look at the role of the Disarmament Commission. We will have to consider in due course how to reflect upon the outcome of his efforts. My delegation does not intend to prejudge the outcome, but I would like to express my delegation's preference for a shorter period for the substantive meetings of the Commission. This view is shared by many disciples of the disarmament cause — as all of us in this room are — whose possible creative contributions are being somewhat hampered by the burden of attending an almost uninterrupted series of meetings in various disarmament forums.

Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — the associated country Cyprus, and the European Free Trade Area countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I would like to pass on my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 1998 session. My best wishes go also to your predecessor, Ambassador

García of Colombia, for his skilful handling of last year's session.

Looking back on last year's session, there were in-depth discussions on all three substantive agenda items. Two of these were new, so the discussion concentrated on laying the foundations for future, more substantive work, hopefully leading to the adoption of agreed guidelines. But none of the three Working Groups was able to adopt more than a procedural report, and even then did so only with considerable difficulty. As the Presidency of the European Union at the time made clear, we are concerned about this development and urge all delegations to approach this year's session in a more constructive and flexible spirit.

This year the Commission will have on its agenda one item in its third year, the fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV); and two in their second years, nuclear-weapon-free zones and guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 52/38 G.

The members of the European Union continue to attach importance to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among States of the region concerned which strengthen regional and international peace and security. The advances in recent years in this area and the support given by nuclear-weapon States is to be applauded. The names Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba are now well ensconced in the lexicon of disarmament and arms control. Additionally, the nuclear-weapon States continue to be engaged in a constructive dialogue with the countries of South-East Asia on the Treaty of Bangkok. The ball is also beginning to roll on the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. Last year's discussion at the Disarmament Commission usefully set the parameters for a more substantive debate this year. This year's debate might include the proposals for discussion of topics which were included in last year's final report and build upon the many useful contributions which were made last year. Among those was the European Union's list of elements conducive to the successful establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

This year the Disarmament Commission will address, for the last time, the topic of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament. We all approach this subject this year in the wake of the first General Assembly resolution on the subject since 1994 to be adopted by consensus: resolution 52/38 F. The European Union strongly hopes that this welcome development will be carried through the Disarmament Commission to enable a successful conclusion of the item this year.

The European Union continues to believe that SSOD IV should look at disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the security environment of today and tomorrow as we approach the start of the new millennium. The need for a revised, realistic and up-to-date disarmament agenda is well known. If SSOD IV is to fulfil its true potential and not go the same way as its two predecessors, there needs to be consensus on its objectives. In other words, the international community should agree on what it wants to get out of an SSOD IV. The special session should not be convened unless this consensus is present; to do so would invite a failure we cannot afford. As for the special session itself, the European Union continues to believe that its agenda should strike a balance between issues related to weapons of mass destruction and conventional issues.

The European Union has in the past attempted to build bridges between opposing views on SSOD IV at the General Assembly and at the Disarmament Commission. We have also submitted a number of constructive papers on what we see as the way forward. Indeed, last year we submitted a working paper which many were prepared to take as the basis for the Working Group's report. The members of the European Union look forward to a further constructive debate at this year's session and hope that it can contribute to realizing the long-elusive consensus we are all seeking.

The subject of conventional disarmament and arms control is one which cannot be ignored. In recent years many important voices, including the Secretary-General's, have highlighted the importance of addressing the question of conventional weapons. It is therefore only right that the Disarmament Commission devote at least part of its agenda to a conventional item. Since we last met here, the world has witnessed important progress in the drive to ban anti-personnel landmines. The proliferation of small arms has now taken centre stage. The horrific effects and problems caused by illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their accumulation in certain regions are all too well known to the international community. The United Nations and the international community should continue to address these problems. We endorse the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and welcome the forthcoming designation of a new panel of experts, with a view to providing the international community

with some practical guidelines. The European Union itself is taking practical measures to take forward its programme on combating and preventing illicit trafficking in conventional arms: a workshop on small arms will take place in southern Africa next month.

The importance of regional and international peace and stability is universally recognized, and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which was established to promote greater transparency in arms transfers, to identify destabilizing accumulations of major weapons and thus to contribute to preventive diplomacy, is now in its sixth year. The European Union would like to take this opportunity once again to encourage all States to submit full returns to the Register. In addition, the European Union is currently considering proposals for a European Union code of conduct in arms exports, to set high common standards to govern arms exports from all European Union member States. We shall also in time be encouraging other major arms exporters to adopt a similar code.

The European Union looks forward to the second year of this particular conventional item, which is of course directly related to the General Assembly resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. The European Union welcomes the fact that resolution 52/38 G was adopted by consensus. As with the item on nuclear-weapon-free zones, the European Union feels that last year's useful discussion has set the parameters for a substantive and productive debate this year. Last year, much of the discussion concerned the scope of our work and whether this should be a broad range of conventional disarmament issues or focus on practical post-conflict measures. The European Union continues to believe that the latter approach will prove to be the more effective. A practical set of guidelines, related specifically to disarmament measures, which could be drawn upon in a post-conflict situation and which could help place such measures into a more coherent framework, addressing not only immediate but medium-term concerns, would be a valuable and worthwhile contribution which the Disarmament Commission could make. This would not duplicate work under way in other forums and would offer a distinct and concrete issue, well suited to the time available and to the working methods of the Disarmament Commission. To agree on such a set of guidelines would once again go a long way towards revitalizing the Commission.

The Disarmament Commission has in the last few years been successful in adopting a number of guidelines, in particular, in 1996, the report on recommendations on international arms transfers. Nevertheless, an honest assessment of the Commission in recent years would presumably show that we, as Member States, have failed to use this potentially important piece of the disarmament machinery to the full. The European Union believes that, if the Disarmament Commission is to maintain its value to Member States, it needs to reflect, as do all other disarmament institutions, on how it can improve itself. We therefore warmly welcome the adoption last December of General Assembly resolution 52/12 B on United Nations reform, which decided, *inter alia*, in paragraph 8, that the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee of the General Assembly should undertake a review of their work, to be concluded before the end of the fifty-second session, with a view to its "revitalization, rationalization and streamlining". The Union therefore hopes that, in accordance with the spirit of that consensus resolution, sufficient time can be set aside during the 1998 session for a debate, followed by decisions, on how best we can make the Disarmament Commission more effective and more productive. The European Union is ready to contribute constructively to such a debate.

More immediate procedural concerns of the European Union are the time allocated to the Disarmament Commission this year and that we make maximum use of the conference services allocated to us. Last year, too many meetings were poorly attended and ended early. The timetable left many gaps which might have been more productively used. The Working Groups should therefore be encouraged by their respective Chairmen to move expeditiously to the elaboration of texts. We need to improve further the working methods of the Commission and to use the time and resources allocated to our substantive work in the most efficient and economic manner. The European Union will be arguing strongly for meeting time during this year's session to be organized as efficiently and productively as possible and for the session to last no more than three weeks, including the introduction and adoption of the final reports of the subsidiary bodies and the report of the Commission itself. Under your guidance, Mr. Chairman, and with the support of the other members of the Bureau, this is an attainable goal. The many delegations whose members are involved in the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would thus be enabled to leave in good time for its start in Geneva on 27 April.

In conclusion, the European Union looks forward to working constructively with you, Mr. Chairman, your Bureau and other delegations over the next three weeks to bring success on all the items on our agenda as well as a meaningful debate on the future direction of this important body.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Commission for this year's substantive session. We are convinced that under your leadership the Commission will successfully move forward in its deliberations. Towards that end, you can be assured of the cooperation of the Colombian delegation.

I wish also to convey our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election for this session of the Commission.

This year the Commission is beginning its deliberations with a number of new and positive elements. We welcome the establishment of the Department of Disarmament Affairs, headed by Ambassador Dhanapala as Under-Secretary-General, as we do the intention of organizing the Department in a functional way, with units in New York in charge of issues relating to weapons of mass destruction, conventional disarmament and regional centres for disarmament and information, and with a branch in Geneva dealing with the Conference on Disarmament. This will allow us to handle the various aspects of disarmament in a more specialized and focused manner while giving the question the stature it deserves within the work of the United Nations.

The opportunity to work on issues in depth and the universality of its composition are two of the Disarmament Commission's essential elements and comparative advantages, as was envisaged in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Here, issues are developed for future negotiating processes. Furthermore, the Commission has already identified a list of potential items for future agendas, and has thus overcome the difficulties that arose in the past on this subject.

The strengthening of the Commission was the subject of its deliberations in 1990, when certain changes were made in the manner of its functioning. We agreed that the work of the Commission could be organized even more efficiently. Among the various measures that could be taken, we believe that — with a view to appropriate participation by all delegations, including the smaller ones — a desirable one would be that the Working Groups not meet simultaneously.

We are beginning the third year of work on the item on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). It is clear that although we have not yet reached a consensus on the objectives and on the agenda of SSOD IV, some progress was made in this respect during last year's substantive session. My delegation naturally supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on this issue. Likewise, we believe that the document submitted by the Chairman of the Working Group on SSOD IV during the last substantive session contains elements on which we can make progress in our deliberations.

It is clearly appropriate to undertake a complete review of the status of all issues related to disarmament in the wake of the end of the cold war, and for that purpose the appropriate forum is undoubtedly SSOD IV. In this connection, we wish to highlight the constructive role of the Disarmament Commission in the development of the positions of Member States on SSOD IV, which led to the adoption by consensus of the resolution on the subject during the current session of the General Assembly.

The inclusion in our agenda, starting last year, of the item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" reflects the growing contemporary importance of these zones. There is no doubt that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime within the framework of nuclear disarmament objectives while promoting international peace and security at both the regional and global levels.

An intensive and constructive debate was held during the Commission's 1997 session, on which we must build. We are confident that during this substantive session it should be possible, in the relevant Working Group, further to define the framework of discussion and the scope of issues such as the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones as an instrument to strengthen peace, security and stability; the characteristics of the region, including its geographical definition; the relationship between existing zones and treaties; the role of verification and mechanisms for consultation and negotiation; and elements leading to the establishment of such zones.

It is important that the deliberations of the Group take into account the approaches of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and yield concrete recommendations with a view to the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones where none yet exist, including the Middle East and Central Asia, and the consolidation of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as a large nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The item "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N" is beginning its second year under deliberation in the Commission.

The recommendations and guidelines under discussion in the Working Group refer to tangible disarmament measures that can contribute to the consolidation of peace in the processes in which the United Nations participates. The usefulness of the guidelines is obvious and goes beyond the framework of the aforementioned processes. That is why it is a sterile and complex exercise to try specify who, beyond the United Nations, might be served by these guidelines, which, moreover, are neither imposed nor obligatory.

It is clear that emphasis must be placed on aspects falling within the sphere of disarmament, which is this Commission's field of activity. It is also clear that we must make maximum use of United Nations experience in various parts of the world, not only in conflicts themselves, but also in the process of post-conflict peace-building. Such experience should be carefully analysed in order to avoid counterproductive generalizations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our full readiness to cooperate with the Commission for the achievement of tangible results. That is the best way to strengthen it comprehensively.

The Chairman: There are still two delegations inscribed on my list of speakers for this meeting. I would urge delegations to inscribe themselves more actively on the list for this meeting and this afternoon's meeting in order to make more effective use of the time allotted to us.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Our warmest congratulations go to you, Mr. Chairman, and to other members of the Bureau just elected. I am hopeful that, in your able hands, this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will achieve its mandated goals.

This year's session of the Disarmament Commission assumes a special significance in view of the United Nations Secretariat's renewed emphasis on disarmament through the elevation of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into the Department of Disarmament Affairs. We congratulate Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala on his well-deserved appointment to the post of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We look forward to working closely with him. Personally, if I may say so, knowing and appreciating his abilities over the years as I do, it is a special pleasure for me to see him in his new position.

We are also pleased to see the retention of the posts of the heads of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, which my delegation strongly supported at the main segment of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

It has been some time since the cold war ended. The end of ideological rift had a propitious impact on the prospects for disarmament. It is time that we seized the opportunity and advanced the cause of disarmament through rational and businesslike negotiations among States. It is important that we deliberate with open minds and refrain from taking a rigid attitude, which was symptomatic of the cold-war era.

The Disarmament Commission is the specialized deliberative body of the United Nations, entrusted with the task of the in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues. We strongly support the work of this multilateral machinery. We believe that, in this forum, there is room for harmonious, professional-style work. The end products of such work will have a definite, positive impact on the disarmament scenario of the world. We also feel that it is a good idea to limit the work in the sessions of the Commission to a three-item phased agenda. This contributes to the efficiency of the Commission.

Bangladesh is committed by its Constitution to upholding the principle of general and complete disarmament. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is our professed goal. In October 1996, in her first statement before the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, said:

> "Nuclear weapons are an abomination and surely can have no place in a civilized world. This awareness clearly exists, and the desire for their elimination is also discernible... What is called for

now is the courage, confidence and initiative to pursue the nuclear disarmament agenda in all earnestness." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings*, 40th meeting, p. 9]

It is our view that nuclear-weapon-free zones can supplement global efforts towards our ultimate objective of a world free from all nuclear threats. The developments that have taken place in recent times in the field of nuclear-weapon-free zones are significant. We believe that the recent celebration of the anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the signing of the Treaty of Rarotonga by the United Kingdom, the United States and France, and the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty are practical testimony to the continuing commitment of States to nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are also encouraged by the entry into force of the Bangkok Treaty on the South-east Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone last year. The 1997 Almaty Declaration by the Heads of State of five Central Asian countries laid the foundation of a new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The General Assembly resolution adopted by consensus at its fifty-second session in support of the establishment of this zone also sends a positive signal for the prospects of its establishment.

Bangladesh stands in admiration of these positive developments. The work of the Commission on nuclear-weapon-free zones will help advance this positive trend. We appreciate the interest of delegations in the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, manifested by the submission of a large number of working papers at last year's session of the Commission. We hope that the Commission will be able to give thorough consideration to the issue at this session.

We call for an early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). It is time that the international community reviewed the implementation of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly — which was the first special session devoted to disarmament — and took stock of the international security and disarmament situation in the post-cold-war era. While nuclear disarmament should remain the highest priority for us, we have to identify the emerging challenges presented by the new era and to form an agreed plan of action to deal with them in the true spirit of multilateralism. We believe that only a special session of the General Assembly can address the subject of disarmament with the comprehensiveness and thoroughness it deserves.

It is discouraging that the convening of SSOD IV has been a debated issue. However, it gives us some comfort to note that the Commission, at its last session, was able to come to a general agreement that SSOD IV would be convened — subject, of course, to the emergence of a consensus on its objective and agenda. This, we believe, is a positive development. Budgetary constraints notwithstanding, Bangladesh believes that that session would be useful in furthering the cause of general and complete disarmament. It is our sincere expectation that the Commission will be able to overcome all divergences and pave the way for SSOD IV to be a reality at the dawn of the new millennium.

While weapons of mass destruction remain one of the greatest menaces to human civilization, the heavy toll taken by conventional weapons cannot be overlooked. Excessive accumulations of such arms not commensurate with the legitimate security concerns of a country is also a major destabilizing factor. Millions of people in regional wars and conflicts have been victims of conventional weapons since the Second World War. It is a fact that developing countries are the major users and victims of conventional weapons. Therefore, developing countries should try to limit their acquisition of such weapons to levels justified by their legitimate security needs and in line with prioritization of the use of their resources. However, in order really to arrest the proliferation of conventional weapons, it is also the responsibility of the weapon-exporting countries to exercise restraint in selling these weapons. We are pleased to note that at last year's session the Commission made satisfactory progress in its work on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament. We are optimistic that the guidelines will take final shape at this session of the Commission.

Before I conclude, I wish to emphasize the importance of transparency in armaments. None of our efforts at disarmament — whether treaties or mere guidelines — will be effective unless we can establish a foolproof regime of transparency in armaments. In this context, I would like to flag the point that transparency should be applied in a balanced manner. It should apply not just in the case of acquisitions but also in the cases of production, use, stockpiling and export of armaments.

Bangladesh hopes that, in its deliberations in the coming days, the Disarmament Commission will live up to the expectations of all of us. We will extend our unstinting support to you, Mr. Chairman, in your efforts for the success of the 1998 substantive session.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): I would like, Sir, to convey to you my delegation's congratulations on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. Being aware of your dedication to the cause of disarmament, we are confident that under your guidance our work will achieve substantive progress and success. Our felicitations go also to the other members of the Bureau on their election. We congratulate Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala on his well-deserved appointment to the post of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

It is an undeniable truth that although the end of the cold war has reduced the threat of nuclear war, it has not eliminated the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. In recent months, we have witnessed a galaxy of former heads of State or Government, generals and admirals, some of whom commanded nuclear forces, drawing our attention to the sheer destructiveness of nuclear weapons. Their comments are powerful statements of common concern and reflect mounting support for the abolition of nuclear weapons, a goal which has global implications and which remains an imperative. Hence, our main focus in the disarmament agenda should continue to be to seek further deep reductions in the current stockpiles with a view to their ultimate total elimination, while curbing vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and banning fissile materials for weapons purposes.

The endeavours to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned have demonstrated that regional initiatives have once again proved to be successful and are widely acknowledged as significant contributions to nuclear disarmament. The numerous working papers submitted in this regard reflect the sustained interest of many Member States not only to establish such zones where they do not exist but also to solidify those that have been established in various regions of the world. They also deal with the security, political and legal issues involved and identify pertinent questions for further consideration during the current session of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation remains hopeful that in-depth consideration of the various ideas and approaches already advanced will lead to substantive progress on the formulation of guidelines and recommendations for the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones as a viable modality to enhance peace and security, both globally and regionally.

As far as a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is concerned, the non-paper submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement offers a sufficiently broad framework to arrive at a common understanding on how to proceed with the task of convening such a session. While taking into account the disparate attempts made by the international community to limit armaments in the post-cold-war era, a special session devoted to disarmament will streamline those endeavours and will provide us with an opportunity to appraise the current international situation, especially in the light of the vital objective of ending the incessant arms race and achieving substantial progress in disarmament, and to assess the implementation or non-implementation of decisions, resolutions and treaty provisions. In these endeavours, the reports of the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as a review of relevant General Assembly resolutions and the status of negotiations in bilateral and multilateral forums, will provide significant inputs.

Such an assessment will prove useful and instructive, as valuable conclusions can be drawn from the achievements and failures of the past 10 years. It would therefore be more productive if under the agenda items proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement it proved possible to recognize and stress the positive elements and new insights on the disarmament process gained over the past decade, to acknowledge the negative aspects and setbacks, and thereby to give a fresh new impetus to our continuing efforts. This calls for a positive and constructive attitude with regard both to the review of the past and to guidelines for the future.

As regards the specific subjects to be considered at a special session, it bears reiterating that the question of nuclear disarmament in all its aspects should be given more focus. But attention should also be focused on other issues as well, including, *inter alia* the reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments. A fourth special session on disarmament should also pronounce itself unambiguously on the need to enhance and strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and should agree on practical measures to increase the effectiveness of the existing disarmament machinery.

Beyond doubt, there is a clear and urgent need to reassess our thinking and approaches towards disarmament and related issues. This will open a window of opportunity to achieve security for all States at lower levels of armaments. The task ahead calls for both vision and foresight concerning our objectives and the agenda

for a special session devoted to disarmament. Indonesia remains confident that Member States can collectively endeavour to respond to the General Assembly's call and to seek a consensus. In doing so, we can further the cause of arms limitation and disarmament.

Deliberations last year on the third substantive item on our agenda reflected the concerns of a number of Member States regarding the scope and approaches that may be envisioned on an issue that is admittedly complex. Hence, the task would seem to be formidable. It calls, among other things, for confidence-building measures and restraint in armaments in order to forestall turmoil and instability in the post-conflict era. These measures are to be undertaken, in coordination with a programme for disarmament, to stem the proliferation of weapons, to prevent illicit arms acquisitions and to demobilize and reintegrate former combatants into unified armed forces. These and other measures would have to be coordinated into an integrated approach by the Member States as well as by regional and subregional organizations involved in ensuring security and stability and in rebuilding societies with a view to achieving socio-economic development. In our view, such complex issues would necessarily have to be examined at the highest political levels for them to evolve into a concrete plan of action.

In conclusion, my delegation regards the papers presented last year by the Chairmen of the three Working Groups as balanced texts which could provide a useful basis to structure our deliberations. These could be supplemented by the working papers already submitted by States or groups of States, which have also identified issues for further elaboration and advanced new ideas, approaches and concepts. We would also welcome new input intended to resolve our differences. With these things taken together, we can envision the formulation of principles, guidelines and recommendations for negotiation on specific disarmament issues. The successful conclusion of these endeavours would no doubt contribute to the fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to the Disarmament Commission by the General Assembly and thereby demonstrate the continuing utility and indispensable role of this forum. We firmly believe that the Disarmament Commission can continue to make a constructive contribution to progress towards the goal of arms limitation and disarmament. That the work of the Commission is important, especially at this crucial juncture, needs no emphasis. My delegation pledges its continuing support in our common endeavours to enhance the Commission's role in multilateral disarmament efforts.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.220

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

220th Meeting
Monday, 6 April 1998, 3.25 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

General exchange of views (continued)

Mr. Dimitrov (Bulgaria): Allow me first, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this important Commission. I am confident that under your able guidance the Disarmament Commission will achieve tangible results. Our appreciation goes also to your predecessor, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, for his outstanding performance last session.

Bulgaria associated itself with the statement made this morning by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. For that reason, I will confine my intervention today to certain issues of particular interest to my country.

Bulgaria will be following with keenest attention the deliberations on guidelines on conventional arms control during the current session. Such sensitive issues as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation in certain regions are on our high-priority agenda today. We share the view that a more flexible and constructive approach to these substantive questions would allow us to achieve further progress in the discussions this year. In this regard, I would like to underline the valuable contribution made by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms in the report it submitted to the First Committee at the fifty-second session.

The Bulgarian Government is convinced of the need for a comprehensive approach to promote control and reduction of small arms in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner. Such an approach is particularly relevant in view of the excessive accumulation and proliferation of these weapons in certain countries and regions of south-eastern Europe where post-conflict ethnic and political tension still exists. Bulgaria is deeply concerned that the insufficient control and illicit trafficking of small arms in those countries will continue to have a negative effect on the fragile stability of the region as a whole. In order to address this and other challenges to regional security, my country proposed confidence- and security-building measures for consideration by our regional partners, including common activities to prevent illicit arms trafficking. These measures constitute an important element of the initiative for cooperation on security issues in south-eastern Europe launched by the Bulgarian Government last year. According to the procedure that was adopted, these activities are open for further discussion and could be updated on a bilateral or multilateral basis among participating States.

My country attaches prime importance to transparency in international arms transfers. We are of the view that the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is only a first modest step in setting up a working mechanism for transparency. This has to be implemented smoothly and developed gradually for the cause of peace and security. We believe that no tangible results can be achieved in this area unless a reasonable balance is established between the legitimate arms requirements of suppliers and recipients on the one hand and the need to promote arms control on the other.

98-85213 (E)

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In recent years the Bulgarian Government has repeatedly declared its adherence to internationally harmonized guidelines and norms for control of the foreign trade in arms and technologies, controlled by the former Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Strategic Export Controls (COCOM). I would like to recall that as early as 1992 Bulgaria cooperated closely with the United States and other countries in preventing illegal arms deals and transfers. The declarations of the present Bulgarian Government have been backed by the introduction of appropriate regulations and administrative procedures for export-control licensing. In addition, the Special Interdepartmental Council at the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, set up to ensure and monitor the effective implementation of the established export-control regime, is successfully performing its tasks. This is the only licensing body in the country authorized to issue general trading licences to interested companies as well as licences for specific transactions in the same field. Strict control is being exercised to prevent unauthorized arms transfers.

My delegation considers the internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned, as an effective instrument to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This issue gains even greater significance in the context of the forthcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Furthermore, we are convinced that the regional approach in nuclear disarmament has the additional advantage of producing beneficial effects in other disarmament fields as well. At the same time, we believe that there can be no uniform pattern of nuclear-weapon-free zones, because of dissimilar geographic circumstances and different political, economic and strategic considerations.

In conclusion, I would like to note that as for the question of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, my delegation fully supports the view expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union that we need a consensus on its objectives and a balanced agenda relating both to weapons of mass destruction and to conventional ones.

Mr. Vachon (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): In considering the agenda before us, not only can we benefit from last year's deliberations, but we must stretch our minds to incorporate new and varied perspectives. My delegation is sure that under your guidance, Mr. Chairman, and that of the Chairmen of the three Working Groups, this will be an interesting and productive session.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada welcomes the opportunity to address nuclear-weapons issues in this and in other forums, recognizing that global and regional efforts each have important roles to play. The United Nations Disarmament Commission, as a global deliberating forum, can not only increase awareness of issues and envisage goals to be achieved, but also identify principles and offer guidelines to facilitate achievement of those goals. We explored to some extent all of those things last year in relation to our discussion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, but we have yet to identify a focus that will take us beyond the debates already prevailing in other forums.

The prospects for regional initiatives have not been exhausted, but one would be mistaken to believe that such initiatives can be easily brought to fruition if they are to have a genuine impact on regional security. Canada, for its part, is already on record as welcoming and encouraging progress towards the development and implementation of nuclear-weapon-free zone agreements consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and internationally agreed criteria. Such arrangements, freely arrived at among the States concerned, particularly in regions afflicted with conflicts, enhance regional and global peace and security and contribute to non-proliferation and disarmament. Such positive developments cannot be taken for granted, however. Canada also encourages adherence by the nuclear-weapon States to nuclear-weapon-free zone agreements. Last year, my delegation distributed a working paper entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free Zones: a comparative perspective", and we wish to express our appreciation to those who communicated their views to us about the document, which was intended to promote discussion.

On the subject of a United Nations special session devoted to disarmament, we have some way to go, it would seem, before these deliberations will point the way to an appropriate framework and balanced agenda that would attract consensus. We continue to believe that such consensus is necessary if we are to convene a special session that can make a meaningful contribution to the world's work on disarmament and to the ways and means by which that work will be conducted in the future.

On the topic of consolidation of peace, there have been significant developments over the last year that will assist in informing our own deliberations and that, we believe, are fully consistent with the initiative that prompted this particular topic. Of these, two are of immediate interest to this body. First and foremost are the changes in the United Nations Organization itself. My delegation would like to join with others in welcoming the appointment of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala to head the new Department of Disarmament Affairs, given that his work over many years is so well known to us all. In the context of this topic, we are particularly encouraged that he will dedicate a part of his Department to the broad issue of conventional weapons, including practical disarmament measures.

From the establishment of the disarmament Department through to the establishment of consultative and management mechanisms to address cross-cutting issues, these reforms hold out great promise and are fully supported by Canada. One such cross-cutting issue, in our view, is consolidation of peace, which requires not only expertise that is found in political affairs and peacekeeping, but also arms-control expertise, which now has a particular concentration in the new Department. We agree that more thought needs to be given to weapons-related issues as an integral part of peace accords where the United Nations is involved in conflict resolution.

Secondly, we can derive satisfaction from the first meeting of the group of interested States established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/38 G, which took place last month. Its focus on practical disarmament measures, in the form of concrete projects, including information sharing, is most welcome and clearly demonstrates the level of interest in such matters. Furthermore, it demonstrates that our deliberations are not taking place in a vacuum, which should lend impetus to the successful conclusion of our work.

Linking these two points is the fact that present at the meeting in March were representatives of the three United Nations Departments of Disarmament Affairs, of Peacekeeping Operations and of Political Affairs. With so much experience upon which to draw, this can only augur well for the future and for that most important ingredient of success, effective coordination.

To conclude, may I simply add that my delegation will circulate a paper which, we believe, derives from the constructive discussion that took place last year and that we trust will reinforce our common sense of the importance of this topic.

Mr. Núñez-Mosquera (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session and to wish you success in your work. Your experience and knowledge of the issues augur well for our work, and you can count on the support of the Cuban delegation at all times. I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador García of Colombia on his excellent guidance of the work of the Commission last year.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, the Disarmament Commission is to undertake a review of its work and report to the Assembly before the conclusion of the fifty-second session. Cuba believes that this Commission has a key role to play in the multilateral disarmament machinery as the sole specialized deliberative body with universal participation. The attempts that in one way or another have been and are being promoted by certain countries with the aim putting an end to the Commission or reducing its importance will not receive our support.

The Commission has for some years now been taking steps towards rationalizing its work, with concrete results such as the implementation of a three-item phased approach. Achieving a more effective interaction among the Disarmament Commission, the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament, in the context of which the Commission would be able to consider and present to the other two forums concrete recommendations on high-priority items, should be the central objective of our efforts towards rationalization.

This deliberative body must continue to hold annual substantive sessions with a maximum duration of four weeks. Likewise, it should maintain the three-item phased approach, with three-year periods for the consideration of the items. In exceptional circumstances, and with the necessary consensus, consideration of certain items could be confined to two years or extended to four. The general debate at the beginning of the substantive session should continue to be held, and it should be ensured that all delegations that wish to do so can express their opinions in that debate.

Last year the Working Group on the item "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the

region concerned" succeeded in identifying an important group of elements that will have to be dealt with in greater depth during the session that is beginning today. Questions relating to principles and to institutional arrangements will require particular attention.

While we recognize the tremendous importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, we must reiterate that these constitute partial security measures that require the simultaneous adoption of other measures aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons.

In the specific case of Cuba, our position in respect of the Treaty of Tlatelolco should be seen in the context of the special situation created by the policy of blockade and the aggressive climate fostered by governing circles in the United States against our country. While Cuba signed the Treaty in 1995 as a means of reaffirming its support for the objectives that inspire our region to work towards the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean, the proper time for Cuba's ratification of that Treaty would be inextricably linked to a change in conditions that would allow a climate of peace and full respect to arise and be strengthened in relations between the two countries. This necessarily involves an end to the policy of aggression and the lifting of all restrictive measures against Cuba.

This must not be interpreted in any way as a deviation on our part from our unswerving commitment to the cause of Latin American integration, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Far be it from Cuba to put at risk the lofty and noble purposes enshrined in the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Cuba has been a staunch proponent of the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The reasons are clear: as has been reiterated in many declarations of the Non-Aligned Movement, that gathering would make it possible to evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in 1978 and to draft new measures in the field of disarmament and related security issues.

In spite of the series of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly since 1994 calling for the convening of the fourth special session, any real possibility of its taking place seems to be growing fainter. It would be regrettable if the international community were obliged to shoulder the consequences of the obvious lack of interest displayed by a nuclear Power regarding the holding of that important event.

This year it is crucial that the Commission produce concrete results on this issue. The mechanism of consensus cannot continue to be manipulated with a view to postponing indefinitely the reaching of agreements on the objectives and the agenda of the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

The complexities of the item entitled "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N" are well known. The link between this and areas that are not yet well defined or that are frankly ambiguous, such as areas related to preventive diplomacy, the maintenance of peace and post-conflict peace-building, means that the Commission must focus its efforts on the disarmament component and not try to take on aspects that are beyond its mandate.

Consideration of this item must take into account the legitimate defence and security interests of States, as well as the specific characteristics of regions and countries in which there have been conflicts. Otherwise, dangerous imbalances would result that would place certain States at a disadvantage vis-à-vis others.

To illustrate the negative implications that such imbalances could have in the area of conventional weapons, I should like briefly to refer to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which was opened for signature last December in Ottawa.

For Cuba, which fully shares the humanitarian concerns over the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of anti-personnel mines, especially in internal conflicts, renouncing the use of this type of weapon in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity constitutes a challenge that we cannot afford to take up. As far as Cuba is concerned, the concept of a war fought by the people as a whole provides for the use of mines at the borders of our national territory exclusively for defensive purposes, with the objective of dealing with imminent threats or foreign aggression.

In conclusion, may I say that the Cuban delegation will participate actively in the consideration of the three substantive items on the Commission's agenda and intends to contribute with concrete proposals to the development of our work.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of our Commission and to express the confidence of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan that your knowledge and experience will contribute to the successful outcome of the 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that the Bureau can count on the close cooperation of my delegation.

I also wish to thank your predecessor, Ambassador García, for his successful leadership at last year's session.

The 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is being held at a time when the international community and the United Nations Secretariat are paying increasing attention to disarmament issues. This is evident from the upgrading of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs to the level of a United Nations Department. In this regard, we are pleased to congratulate Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala on his appointment as head of that Department with the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

The delegation of Uzbekistan stresses the significance of the fact that, among the priority activities of the Disarmament Commission, special importance is being attached to the issue of expanding the nuclear-weapon-free zones, which has been considered by the Commission over the last three years. This trend was highlighted as a separate item in the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The results of the 1995 Conference were welcomed in Uzbekistan with particular optimism and satisfaction, and its importance was confirmed by the documents of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT and by the agenda of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We are sure that this issue will be considered a priority question at the forthcoming NPT Review Conference in the year 2000. It is also important in view of the fact that more than 100 countries have become parties to existing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Uzbekistan fully supports the principle of the indivisibility of internal, regional and global security. One of the first steps taken by our country as a newly independent State was to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. At the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in 1993, the President of Uzbekistan called upon the States of the region to declare Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and we have moved consistently towards the fulfilment of that initiative.

One concrete confirmation of this policy was the convening of the International Conference entitled "Central Asia — Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone" in Tashkent from 14 to 16 September 1997, with the participation of high-level representatives of more than 60 countries and international organizations. That forum was a significant event in the history of the region. However, we are well aware that the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia will be a lengthy one that should be carried out within the framework of existing international agreements, in particular the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and on a basis of accumulated international experience.

In this regard, a reliable system of collective efforts by States participating in this initiative should be developed at the regional level. Those efforts must establish a non-proliferation regime, ensure the ecological safety of hazardous industries involving nuclear raw materials and prevent leakage of nuclear technologies and materials.

At the international level, it is necessary to give priority to the settlement of regional problems in the context of their impact on the global situation. The phased advancement towards global security is possible only after we create secure and stable regions. In other words, when dealing with global problems, it is essential to follow the principle of moving from regionalism to globalism. In this regard, Uzbekistan highly appreciates the efforts of international organizations — above all the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the International Atomic Energy Agency — for their support of the Central Asian initiative.

In conformity with the provisions of the NPT — *inter alia*, its article VII — and paragraphs 5 to 7 of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", the leaders of the five Central Asian States, in the Almaty Declaration of 28 February 1997, stated their intention of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which was then confirmed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of those countries in a statement adopted in Tashkent on 15 September 1997. These facts can be cited as evidence of the political unity

and mutual understanding of the five countries of our region.

We note with satisfaction the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 52/38 S of 9 December 1997, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia", in which, *inter alia*, the Assembly called upon all States to support the initiative aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and requested the Secretary-General, within existing resources, to provide assistance to the Central Asian countries in the preparation of the form and elements of an agreement on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

In our opinion, these documents create an effective basis for the elaboration of a legal framework for the regional treaty, and the States of the region note with satisfaction certain progress in the preparation of a draft of the future treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. That is why we emphasize the hopes we pin on the assistance of the United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs.

The existing nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties share certain basic principles, but they also have special features that reflect the specific characteristics of each region. This is borne out by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga, which have common basic principles as well as specific differences determined by the flexibility of the concept of the nuclear-weapon-free zone. We would like to underline that the drafting of the Central Asian treaty will be considered in the framework of the ecological state of the region.

In any case, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and strengthen the peace and security not only of the regions concerned, but of the international community as a whole. In this regard, the initiative of the Government of Mongolia to establish a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone in its territory deserves special attention. It is especially important that the zone comply with international law and internationally agreed criteria. As it is represented, the 30-year practice of establishing such zones requires a continued understanding of the zones, a definition of their institutional bases and their universalization.

The experience gained by Uzbekistan during its years of independence shows that the young democracies need to formulate and implement measures to strengthen national and regional security and to coordinate and integrate their compliance with international security norms with the activity of relevant international structures. In this regard, I would like to express our hope for the continued support of the international community for the initiative of the countries of our region to establish nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is a special pleasure for my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, a representative of the Republic of Belarus, on your election to the important post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. We view your election as a reflection of the contribution that, in the context of the international community, the Republic of Belarus has made to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the disarmament process. We are convinced that under your guidance the Disarmament Commission will build on last year's results and pursue its own decisions and those of the General Assembly to consolidate its achievements and gain positive new results at this session. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I wish moreover to thank your predecessor, Ambassador García, for his successful stewardship of the Disarmament Commission at its last session.

We welcome the establishment of the Secretariat's Department of Disarmament Affairs and the appointment of a well-known expert in the field, Ambassador Dhanapala, as Under-Secretary-General to head that Department. We also greet Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, who is in New York to participate in our session.

In recent years, the common nature of the task facing regions and countries as they set about implementing their international obligations under disarmament treaties has been underscored by rapprochement on a whole range of issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. Hence the importance that the great majority of States attach to recent events in the disarmament sphere, a number of which I shall now mention.

I begin with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, and the consequent continuity in the implementation process. The following year, 1996, saw the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the withdrawal of all Russian strategic missiles from our territory, which resulted in a broad space in our subregion free from nuclear weapons.

In 1997, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects entered into force, and work began on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) took on a multilateral dimension in September 1997, with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Succession to the ABM Treaty by Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States. Also in 1997, the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was finalized and opened for signature.

In recent years the international community has also seen the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and in 1997 at Helsinki the Presidents of the Russian Federation and of the United States signed agreements relating to strategic stability, nuclear safety, nuclear security and the START III process.

These and many other no less important events constitute an impressive list of concrete steps towards general and complete disarmament. Only this morning, in fact, France and the United Kingdom deposited their instruments of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

This sequence of events shows that disarmament — however critical the positions of certain States may have been — has now, at the end of the century, become a stable and ongoing process. As members know, Belarus has always been very active and has made a practical contribution in all areas of the disarmament process, from conventional to strategic nuclear weapons.

Of special importance is the continued development of regional efforts to create nuclear-weapon-free zones and to expand the space they encompass, by consolidating existing zones and establishing new ones. This is gradually giving form to a world-wide security system for the twenty-first century, which would bar the use of atomic energy for military purposes. Discussions on this subject over the last few years have enabled us to identify new features and nuances in the approaches taken by States to the notion of consolidating existing zones and creating new ones. In its activities in this sphere, Belarus has sought to ensure that the atmosphere in Central Europe — which the end of the cold war purged of suspicion, confrontational military blocs and the arms race — will be no less propitious for strengthening mutual understanding and trust among European peoples into the next century.

That was the focus of the initiative taken by the President of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Alyaksandr Grigoryevich Lukashenka, to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central Europe. This is a logical extension of our own nuclear-disarmament measures. The matter of creating such a nuclear-weapon-free space was discussed at an international conference on that subject, held in 1997 at Minsk. This idea has been outlined in a number of documents of the General Assembly and various disarmament forums, including the Disarmament Commission. These include General Assembly document A/51/708 — in which the concept of creating a space free of nuclear weapons in Central and Eastern Europe is set out — and document A/CN.10/1997/WG.I/WP.9, submitted by the delegation of Belarus in 1997 for consideration by the Disarmament Commission's Working Group I. We hope that, along with other texts, this will form a basis for the Commission's work on final recommendations and a strategy for future international efforts in this area. It is our hope that the idea will be further developed at the present session.

Events of recent years, in both Europe and other regions of the world, show how the general trend towards collective support for national security interests has intensified through the conclusion of treaties and agreements made on a voluntary and mutually acceptable basis by interested countries. That trend, which has been graphically confirmed by the sessions of the principal disarmament forums, as well as by the General Assembly, calls for new approaches and initiatives in this area. These should be adapted to present-day realities as well as to prevailing trends in the approaches taken by a majority of countries to the problems of regional and global security.

Given these conditions, we believe it advisable to consider the idea of establishing in the subregions of Eastern Europe and the Baltic an area of good-neighbourly relations, stability and security, inviting as guarantors the Russian Federation and the United States. Such an initiative could be based on, *inter alia*, regional and subregional conferences, which have become an established practice. In this respect, we believe that promising developments include the increase in

disarmament measures in the European region and the reduction in the military presence and military activities in adjacent or bordering areas, the enhancement of transparency in military expenditure and the expansion of sharing information on military matters on a bilateral and multilateral basis, first and foremost at a regional level.

Further positive developments could include the conclusion of full-fledged bilateral and trilateral agreements on the establishment of good-neighbourly and friendly relations between adjacent countries, the holding of sub-regional conferences and initiatives in the field of international security, with broad consultations between the countries concerned. As they apply to Europe, these would include, in the framework of creating the architecture for European security in the twenty-first century, the preparation of a European security charter — the realization of the idea of a covenant of stability in Europe.

In practical terms, there is an urgent need to define long-term priorities in the field of disarmament and security, to harmonize the process of disarmament with the radical political transformations that have taken place in the world on the threshold of the twenty-first century and to change conditions so as to ensure the national security of States.

In discussing these problems of international security and disarmament in recent years, a general consensus has emerged on the need to begin negotiations on a convention to prohibit the production of fissile material for military purposes, to move towards a legally binding international instrument to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of nuclear weapons, to reduce further the nuclear arsenals of States and to develop and modernize the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

We believe that, in the trend towards international cooperation in disarmament in the short and medium term, priority should be given to efforts to include crimes relating to serious and intentional damage to the environment in the draft Code of Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind.

We welcome the idea of a treaty on nuclear security and stability with the participation of all the nuclear Powers, and the convening in 1999 of a conference for peace.

In the view of the majority of States, a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is called for to focus attention on these and many other issues. As a sponsor of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly at its fifty-first and fifty-second sessions, Belarus considers that an important task of the fourth special session on disarmament should be to review experiences and assess the results of disarmament negotiations in the period following the cold war and to formulate priority disarmament tasks on the threshold of the next century and for the distant future.

Valuable guidelines in this respect have been set out in the United Nations medium-term plan for 1998-2001, providing for such activities as monitoring and evaluating present and future trends in disarmament and international security and identifying problems associated with and caused by the process of disarmament, including the economic and social consequences of disarmament, damage to the environment and conversion, which have not yet been resolved by the international community.

As for determining the mandate of the Disarmament Commission as it applies to the preparations for the fourth special session on disarmament, it would seem to be advisable not to depart from the recommendatory nature of the decisions of the Disarmament Commission. The adoption of decisions should be a prerogative of the preparatory committee for that special session.

The Disarmament Commission must also define the list of issues that will begin a new page in its history, leading it into the twenty-first century. Belarus, together with other sponsors of resolution 51/45 N, participated in the previous session of the Commission in drafting a working document, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace". The current session was preceded by a number of very useful international meetings and consultations on this subject.

Representatives of the Republic of Belarus are participating in working groups established by General Assembly resolutions on strengthening peace through practical disarmament measures and on light weapons. We participated with interest in the work of a number of other expert groups whose proposals we hope will help to ensure the success of the work of the Disarmament Commission this year.

As members know, the report and recommendations of the Tokyo International Conference on Preventive Diplomacy, which took place in January 1998, set out the importance within the system of a preventive strategy in this respect. This includes enhancing the effectiveness of

controls over the accumulation and trade in firearms and light weapons in areas of potential and existing conflicts.

The programme for the reduction of armaments in the Balkan region is one of the positive examples of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures by many countries. Working Group III focused on drafting recommendations in this important area, and the delegation of Belarus intends actively to participate in that Working Group.

During the current session of the Disarmament Commission the question of rationalizing, streamlining and simplifying the Commission's activities will be considered. Together with other delegations, we intend to seek a decision on this very complicated and important issue. It has been recommended that, before the end of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we prepare proposals that will be acceptable to all.We hope for constructive consultations on this issue.

In conclusion, please allow me to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of the willingness of the delegation of Belarus to have a constructive dialogue and to be open with regard to our positions and intentions and, if necessary, to familiarize participants with the approach of Belarus to all of the issues on the agenda for this session.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Belarus for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mrs. Castro de Barish (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me, Sir, to convey to you my delegation's most sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, and I wish to express those same congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We are convinced that under your chairmanship we will enjoy a successful and productive session. I am also pleased to congratulate Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala of India on his appointment to the position of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We wish him every success in his important work.

I represent a State — Costa Rica — that has supported since their inception the efforts of the United Nations in the area of disarmament. We have always supported general and complete disarmament in all of its aspects. We are encouraged to note the recognition at this session of the special importance attached by the Secretary-General to the Centre for Disarmament Affairs through its elevation to the level of Department of Disarmament Affairs.

We take note of the fact that three items are going to be considered to which my own delegation attaches utmost importance. The first is the item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". As Latin Americans, we feel very proud of the recent celebration of the anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, which was the first step towards the attainment of these goals. We wish also to highlight the entry into force last year of the Bangkok Treaty, which established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, and the 1997 Almaty Declaration, adopted by the Heads of State of five countries of Central Asia, which laid the foundations for a new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Significant events such as the signing of the Treaty of Rarotonga by the United Kingdom, the United States and France, and the signing of the Treaty of Pelindaba are cause for celebration, and we hope that this trend will continue. We are convinced that the substantive work of the Commission will make a very valuable contribution towards the attainment of these objectives.

Another very important item on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission concerns the prompt convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). My delegation enthusiastically supported this proposal in the First Committee during the current session of the General Assembly, and we reiterate the conviction expressed in the eighth preambular paragraph of resolution 52/38 F, which states that

> "a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament can set the future course of action in the field of disarmament, arms control and related international security matters".

It is our hope, therefore, that it will be possible to achieve consensus on its objectives and its agenda so that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament can be held in the near future.

The next item is "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Here it is important to recall the first preambular paragraph of that resolution — adopted without a vote — which reaffirms the purpose of the United Nations to maintain peace and security and, in this context, reaffirms in particular the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, as

well as the commitment of Member States to take concrete steps in order to strengthen that role — that is to say, the protagonism of the world Organization and the Disarmament Commission in this respect. All of this has no doubt helped to strengthen the Disarmament Commission.

In this morning's debate, at the 219th meeting, emphasis was placed on the fact that the work of the Commission could be organized even more efficiently than it has been in the past. We are grateful for the suggestion by the representative of Colombia, who said:

> "Among the various measures that could be taken, we believe that — with a view to appropriate participation by all delegations, including the smaller ones — a desirable one would be that the Working Groups not meet simultaneously."

My delegation is among that group of small delegations, and for this reason we find this suggestion very useful and fair.

My delegation believes that the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament are very important, because this is the type of weapons that most affects developing countries. We agree with the statement of the representative of Bangladesh in this respect, because the developing countries are the greatest users, and the greatest victims, of these conventional weapons.

My delegation is also extremely concerned about the indiscriminate use of other, treacherous weapons that harm poor, innocent people who are not even aware of the conflicts in which these weapons are so widely used. I am referring to anti-personnel mines, which the late but not forgotten Jim Grant — then Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) — so eloquently spoke of in 1993, suggesting, before the Commission on Human Rights, that they should be prohibited and destroyed. Subsequently, his successor — the current Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy — has also warned against these perverse weapons, whose principal victims are women and children.

For a long time, the idea of a moratorium was upheld. But that was tantamount to keeping the weapons for some time and then selling them at a higher price, in spite of the fact that they are so inexpensive to produce and so costly to remove. We are already aware of the tragic and traumatic effect of these weapons on all people, be they children, young people or adults.

My delegation wishes here to express one of Costa Rica's convictions. At this session, a resolution entitled "Culture of peace "was adopted in plenary. The objective of the culture of peace is, of course, to replace the culture of war. For this reason, we believe that if the political will can be mustered to begin to replace the culture of war with the culture of peace, this would have a very favourable impact on all disarmament efforts.

My delegation associates itself with those who have expressed the hope that the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission at this session will make a positive and valuable contribution to our desired goals. Mr. Chairman, you can count on our full support for your efforts at this 1998 substantive session.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.221

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

221st Meeting
Wednesday, 8 April 1998, 10.00 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Martynov . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

General exchange of views (continued)

Mr. Hahm (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the 1998 Disarmament Commission session. We are confident that under your skilled and experienced leadership we can achieve a productive outcome. Let me also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and thank Mr. García of Colombia for his outstanding work during last year's session of this Commission.

This year, three of the items that were on the agenda last year are slated for discussion again. We should do our utmost to ensure that the Commission, as a deliberative body and subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, will be able to produce useful recommendations and guidelines for the international community on the issues that fall under its mandate. Allow me now to briefly present the positions of my delegation concerning the issues on our agenda.

My delegation believes that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones are a truly effective and indispensable instrument for promoting nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building at the regional level and therefore are valuable in enhancing not only regional security, but global peace and security as well. We welcome the solid progress made over the past few years towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions around the world.

Having said that, I would like to express my Government's views on what factors are important to consider in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. First, prior consensus should be reached among the countries concerned, including any nuclear-weapon States. Secondly, consideration should be given to the relevant specific characteristics of the region in question, including its security situation and the existence of any regional security mechanisms. Thirdly, the principles of international law, including that of free navigation on the high seas, should be respected. Fourthly, the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, should not be undermined. Fifthly, a clear definition should be established for what constitutes a "geographical entity". Sixthly, an appropriate verification mechanism should be provided, *inter alia* through the application of full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards to all peaceful nuclear facilities in the zone.

With regard to the outcome of this session of the Disarmament Commission, we hope to see the formulation of guidelines based upon a practical assessment of the already established zones and rigorous deliberations regarding the relevant enhanced concepts. Through the formulation of such guidelines we can promote the ongoing efforts to establish further nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Regarding the issue of the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), my delegation's understanding is that, during last year's session, consensus was reached on the virtue of holding the special session. The Republic

98-85219 (E)

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of Korea was among the many countries that voiced their support for doing so. Considering all the remarkable progress made towards non-proliferation and disarmament since the end of the cold war, as well as the fundamental shift in the political landscape that has occurred, we believe it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to set a future course of action in the fields of disarmament and arms control.

However, last year we witnessed divergent views on the objectives and the prospective agenda of the SSOD IV. It is our view that the SSOD IV should address all aspects of disarmament in a balanced manner, with equal attention given to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. Furthermore, if we are to reach consensus, we should seek to be flexible about including issues and avoid excluding them.

For the convenience of our discussion and for the expediency of reaching agreement among Member States, my delegation would like to propose that the SSOD IV employ the categorization of issues outlined in the report of the Working Group.

At the SSOD IV, serious attention should also be given to newly emerging issues, such as new weapons systems arising from scientific advances, particularly in information technology, and the transfer of sensitive technology. In many respects, the drastic recent changes in both technology and international relations call for some degree of shift in our paradigm. We hope that the SSOD IV can create a forward-looking plan of action that includes an enhanced role for the United Nations in the disarmament field.

With regard to agenda item 6, namely, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", the Korean delegation supports the consensual agreement reached last year to focus on the consolidation of peace in post-conflict situations. In this regard, a clear definition of conflict should be developed. The relevant experience gained by the United Nations and other international organizations — among others, the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations — should also be emphasized in the process of formulating guidelines.

Considering the complexity of this issue and the mandate of the Disarmament Commission, it would seem practical and sensible to limit our consideration to practical disarmament measures such as the control of small arms and light weapons, the illicit arms trade and transparency in armaments. There is no denying that small arms and light weapons are the cause of most of the casualties in today's world and a prominent factor behind regional and subregional instability. My delegation endorses and attaches great importance to the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms established by the General Assembly in resolution 50/70 B. We certainly hope that the Working Group will continue its vital role in this regard.

The illicit arms trade, too, is a most disturbing and dangerous phenomenon. It has a destabilizing and destructive effect, particularly with respect to the internal situations of States. To combat the illicit arms trade, greater cooperation between States on a regional level is crucially important. We very much hope that the detailed action programme to facilitate cooperation will be instituted during this session.

The Korean delegation also holds the view that greater transparency and openness in armaments can improve confidence-building and security among States. In this context, we believe that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective measure by which to lessen mistrust, miscalculation and, thereby, potent military tension. My delegation once again strongly encourages those States which have not yet submitted annual reports for the Register to do so at the earliest possible date.

Finally, let me briefly touch upon the rationalization of the work of the Disarmament Commission. We are all aware of the criticism that the Commission's achievements have fallen short of our expectations and that the Commission has not worked as effectively as it should. In this context, my delegation welcomes the initiative taken by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, to appraise the role of the Disarmament Commission in improving itself. The Korean delegation hopes that, in line with the ongoing efforts to renew the United Nations, we can all reach a consensus on how to make the Commission a more effective and streamlined organ, and on how to conduct the Commission's session in a more productive way.

In closing, I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation is poised to play an active and productive role in achieving a successful conclusion to this session.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my

delegation, on your election as Chairman of the Commission. Your renowned knowledge of disarmament issues and your diplomatic experience augur well for the success of our work. You can count upon the active support of the delegation of Mexico in bringing our deliberations to a successful conclusion. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

This year the Disarmament Commission is considering, for the second time, the issue of the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. My delegation believes that we should pay particular attention to identifying common elements in existing treaties establishing these zones so that they can provide a frame of reference for similar legal instruments in the future, stressing in particular the objectives, scope of application, rights and obligations of the parties, verification machinery and entry into force.

Two additional elements that we should discuss relate to the mechanisms for cooperation between the agencies and executive bodies of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, and to harmonizing provisions relating to security guarantees granted by the nuclear-weapon States to the States members of these zones.

We are pleased that the example of Latin America and the Caribbean, manifested in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, whose 30 years in existence provide useful experience for work in other regions, is continuing to encourage new agreements, such as the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 52/38 S.

This is also the second year in which the Commission is considering an item on the preparation of guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. Our discussions must take account of the report of the Secretary-General that was submitted during the previous Assembly session pursuant to resolution 51/45 N, as well as of the changes put forward in resolution 52/38 G on this item.

Mexico is particularly pleased to note the adoption, in the context of the Organization of American States, of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. We believe that this instrument provides useful material for preparing guidelines on regional conventional arms control measures. The text of this Convention is available in the official languages of the United Nations in document A/53/78.

The adoption by consensus of resolution 52/38 F on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament highlights the determination of the sponsors to find common ground for convening that special session. My delegation is pleased that the nuclear-weapon States have given their support to that initiative.

Reaching a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session should not be too complicated a task. I believe that essentially we all share the concern about the threat that nuclear weapons represent to the very survival of the Earth. However, we note with great concern the continuing prevalence, on the threshold of the new century, of doctrines based on nuclear deterrence, including preparations for a nuclear response to a potential attack with other kinds of weapons, which would represent the complete abandonment of the principles of necessity and proportionality.

The delegation of Mexico is convinced that, in accordance with the principles of the San Francisco Charter, the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1996 and the resolutions of the General Assembly, the international community should outline an agenda on disarmament for the next century, including all disarmament issues and the institutional machinery in this area.

We reaffirm our active support for the deliberations on identifying the objectives and the agenda for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Let us focus our energy and make clear our political will to reach an agreement. Let us give dialogue and negotiation another chance.

Mr. Li Changhe (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to begin, Sir, by warmly congratulating you, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. I am convinced that with your talent and experience, you will guide the current session to a successful conclusion. You and the other members of the Bureau can count on the full cooperation of the Chinese and other delegations. I wish also to take this opportunity to thank last session's

Chairman, Ambassador García of Colombia, for his contribution to the work of that session.

In the twentieth century, to which we are about to bid farewell, mankind has suffered through two world wars and experienced a cold war that lasted for more than four decades. Standing at the threshold of a new century, it is clear to us that peace, development, stability and cooperation have become the trend of the times. At present, there is an easing in international relations, the trend of multipolarity is gaining momentum and international arms control and disarmament continues to move forward on all levels. However, the world is far from tranquil. The cold-war mentality lingers on, threatening world peace and stability. Hegemonism and power politics are still hampering the establishment of a fair and rational new world order. Taking into account past experience and lessons learned and preparing ourselves for future opportunities and challenges, we need to cultivate a new security concept and seek new ways to maintain peace.

Experience has shown that the security concept and the security regime of the cold-war era, which were based on military alliances and an escalating arms build-up, cannot lead to a genuine peace. In today's international scenario, activities such as expanding military blocs, strengthening military alliances, retaining and even extending the policy of nuclear deterrence, and conducting research and development on new types of weapon systems that undermine global strategic balance run counter to the trend of the times and are detrimental to international peace and security.

China holds that all countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. This is the political basis and the prerequisite for international security. Every country is entitled to choose a path of development on the basis of its own national conditions. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries under any pretext, nor should any country or group of countries seek absolute security by compromising the security of others.

As the economic basis of security, all countries should, in the interest of equality and mutual benefit, strengthen trade and economic ties and promote scientific and technological cooperation, so as to narrow the development gap between countries and to achieve common prosperity. As a practical way to maintain global peace and security, all countries should enhance consultation and cooperation in the field of security, further mutual understanding and trust, and seek to settle their differences and disputes through peaceful means.

Disarmament and security are interlinked and complementary. The international community attaches great importance to the role of disarmament in the maintenance and promotion of security and is exploring ways and means to further advance the course of international disarmament. As a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament, the Disarmament Commission has for many years played a significant role in formulating guidelines in the disarmament field. Against the new international backdrop, the Commission is expected to respond to current trends and to make further contributions to the maintenance of world peace and security. China has always attached importance to the Commission's work and has participated in and contributed to every session of the Commission. The current session will continue to consider the three items of common concern to the international community on the basis of the work accomplished at the last session. We hope that the outcome of our deliberations will facilitate progress in the field of international disarmament.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) is an item of great importance to all delegations. The last three special sessions of the General Assembly on disarmament, and in particular the Final Document of SSOD I, have played an important role in guiding and promoting international disarmament. Since the end of the cold war, the international situation has changed drastically, and a series of achievements have been recorded in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament. Against such a backdrop, the Chinese delegation is of the view that it is necessary to convene SSOD IV to review the past and look to the future in order to formulate objectives and principles for international arms control and disarmament in the next century.

At the two previous sessions, in-depth discussions were conducted on issues relating to the convening of SSOD IV. Many countries, including China, have put forward a series of reasonable proposals and initiatives in this regard. Since the Disarmament Commission will conclude its consideration of this item at the current session, we hope that all countries, on the basis of the work of the two previous sessions and in the spirit of seeking common ground while putting aside differences,

will be able to reach a common understanding on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a positive role in facilitating nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, thus promoting world and regional peace, stability and security. In recent years, the area covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has expanded. Countries in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe are advocating or taking practical steps to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones. We have noted that the four existing nuclear-weapon-free zones share common objectives but differ in some ways. It would be of great value for the Disarmament Commission to sum up and utilize the positive experience acquired during the establishment and operation of such zones so as to facilitate the consolidation of existing zones and guide the establishment of new ones.

At the last session, delegations discussed the status, scope, principles and objectives of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and reached a common understanding on some guidelines for the establishment of such zones on a preliminary basis. China has always respected and supported the efforts of the non-nuclear-weapon States to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves. China has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. Proceeding from this position, China has signed and ratified the relevant protocols to the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba.

China supports the efforts by South-East Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. We are ready to seek, along with the countries concerned — without prejudicing the territorial sovereignty, maritime rights or interests of those countries — an early settlement of the pending issues so as to facilitate the early signing of the Protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty by all States concerned, including China.

The Chinese delegation would like to reiterate that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. The countries concerned should establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among themselves and in light of actual conditions in their respective regions. The geographical scope of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not cover continental shelves, exclusive economic zones or areas of dispute between the States within the zone and their neighboring countries over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. The status of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not be affected by any other security mechanism, and the States within the zone should not exempt themselves from their nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaty obligations under any pretext, including their membership of a military alliance. We hope that, during the current session, greater common understanding will be reached on guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The current session will also consider the item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. At the last session, delegations discussed and reached a common understanding on the scope of this item. The Chinese delegation hopes that, based on the work of the last session, deliberations will focus on practical arms control and disarmament measures to consolidate peace in regions that have suffered from conflicts. We hope that efforts will be made to achieve further progress.

We are of the view that, in light of the fact that conditions differ from region to region and that conflicts have complicated origins, it is hard to formulate universally applicable principles and measures. We can formulate measures and methods only in accordance with the specific conditions in any given region. The Chinese delegation maintains that, when building and consolidating peace in regions in conflict, it is essential to abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. When formulating and implementing practical disarmament measures, it is necessary to take into account the legitimate requirements of self-defence of the countries concerned and to proceed in accordance with agreements freely arrived at among the parties involved in conflicts. Powers outside the regions that have influence over parties to the conflicts should assume a special responsibility and obligation in promoting arms control and disarmament and in building and consolidating peace in the regions concerned.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): I take great pleasure in extending my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of this important Commission and I wish on this occasion to assure you of our full support in the accomplishment of your onerous

task. My congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau and to your predecessor, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, for his outstanding work at the last session.

The new prospects that have emerged in recent years in the tangible areas of disarmament and international security bear the elements of a renewed vision of peace and stability in the world. The objective of general and complete disarmament, envisaged in terms of respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality and responsibility shared among all States, has thereby been entirely rehabilitated. The emergence of strategic thinking that looks at the military factors both of the national security of States and of international security has gained in relevance and timeliness. The challenges of the future therefore hinge on the necessity of a security that is global in concept, universal in its foundation and impact, and non-discriminatory in its effects and benefits. Hence, a doctrine of collective security, originating in and inspired by the United Nations Charter, can by rights only call for a transcendence of the causes of rivalry between nuclear Powers and for a recognition, through deeds and not merely through professions of faith, of the invalidity of policies based on the balance of terror.

It is this doctrine which, in our view, advocates the emergence and dissemination of a culture of security for people and peoples, mobilizing energies and resources long absorbed by the arms race, to the benefit of the protection and promotion of the rights of all human beings, including the fundamental right to life and to live in conditions compatible with the value and dignity of the individual. Such a doctrine would aim at establishing international peace and security throughout the world, and not just in a few geographical zones deemed to be more worthy of interest than others.

It is this doctrine, indeed, which Algeria has defended everywhere and always, aware that disarmament, international security and economic and social development are an ineluctable whole and the only true foundations for peaceful and harmonious relations among nations. It is through its devotion and fidelity to this doctrine that my country — which has made many gestures over the past few years in favour of general and complete disarmament and the establishment of genuine collective security — deposited, on 11 February, the instruments of ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, commonly called the Pelindaba Treaty. We thereby became the third African State to ratify the Treaty.

In this respect, it is comforting to see that the sphere of denuclearized zones is growing ever larger, to the extent that it now binds 110 States. In the framework of that expansion, the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok Zones have been joined by the new milestone of the 1997 Almaty Declaration, aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We hope that the Middle East, a zone visited by every kind of turmoil and danger, will also one day became a free zone, so that the spectre of nuclear threat will be eliminated once and for all from that region.

Convinced that nuclear disarmament must remain the highest priority on the international disarmament agenda, Algeria believes that the process of nuclear disarmament must be resolutely pursued at the bilateral and multilateral levels. While substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals are agreed upon, we feel it imperative that measures be drafted to prohibit, in all circumstances, the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State, as the International Court of Justice reminded us in its timely and historical Opinion of 8 July 1996.

While we take note of the progress made in Geneva at the first part of the 1998 substantive session with respect to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances, my country wishes to recall that the unilateral guarantees made by several States to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are an inadequate response to our security needs because they are conditional, partial and legally non-binding. That is why we must constantly emphasize that such guarantees can have their full impact only if they are formulated in their entirety in a binding legal instrument among all the nuclear Powers.

In our view too, the disarmament dynamic should be able to encompass a question that is of particular importance to a growing number of States: illicit transfers of conventional weapons, which fuel and exacerbate new, violent transboundary phenomena such as terrorism and drug trafficking. This question is neither minor nor subsidiary as it relates to the national security and stability of many countries; it is important for the international community, through its various disarmament forums, to consider this question with due urgency and to decide on measures to address it effectively.

This session of the Disarmament Commission is of particular importance, because it is our first substantive

session since the adoption of reforms and the establishment of the new Department of Disarmament Affairs, which we hope will provide the impetus that the work of this body requires. Moreover, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the year 2000 will take place in a few days' time.

Regarding the substantive issues to be considered at the present session, we are convinced that while there are certainly priorities on the disarmament agenda there are very strong links among the various agenda items; each supplements the others. It is clear that progress in one area can improve the possibility of reaching our goals in other areas. In any event, this is true for at least three of the matters that are before us.

With respect to the first substantive item, "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned", we are aware of the results of last session's deliberations. However promising they were, these should not make us forget that there were differences among delegations on this item. In this context, the 13 working documents submitted by delegations, plus the paper presented by the Chairman, constitute a basis for reflection, which should be further considered and which should enable us to overcome disputes and make progress on points of agreement. In paragraph 11 of the report of Working Group I on this item, six topics were identified for possible consideration during the next two sessions; we could begin with these. Additional efforts will be necessary to bridge the gaps in this area. For its part, Algeria, which chaired Working Group I last year, will strive at the present session to work in that direction.

On the item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", despite the mixed results of our work last session, we feel that our deliberations will now take place under better auspices thanks to the adoption without a vote of a resolution on this item at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The adoption of that resolution was an important step forward, and we hope it will help remove the last remaining reservations on the purposes of such a session, on the agenda, and on the costs. Members will recall that Algeria was among the States that had objected to convening such a session, for what we thought a sensible reason: the absence of one nuclear-weapon State. With the positive developments since the fifty-second session, we are now in a position to hope that long-awaited agreement on the date and organization of the special session will come about. The special session will give us all the opportunity to engage in an objective evaluation of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done to create the conditions for a safer world for succeeding generations.

Turning to the third substantive item, "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", it may be useful to recall that, as I have already noted, within its geographical area, Algeria devotes the smallest portion of its gross national product to national defence; we believe that the international community should focus on conventional weapons no less than on other kinds of weapons — especially as it is these weapons which, through illicit trafficking, supply terrorist networks whose purpose is to destabilize States, destroy the values of democracy and human rights, and terrorize civilian populations.

Despite the difficulties in identifying all aspects of this question, already noted at the last meeting on this item, which focused on a number of initiatives that could be undertaken, my delegation will continue as it did last year to follow the work of the Working Group on this item, and to call for the strengthening of international cooperation in this area and for the adoption of coordinated, specific and effective measures to address the serious threat posed by the free — and especially the illicit — circulation of conventional weapons.

Let me say a few words about the Disarmament Commission itself. My country will continue fully to support this deliberative body of the General Assembly. Precisely because it is open to participation by all States Members of the Organization, it must continue to be a space for democratic debate and exchange of views, as it has always been. The encouraging results achieved at recent sessions only underscore the fact that the Commission can make a notable contribution in the sphere of disarmament.

Before — and even more so, after — the 1991 reform, the Disarmament Commission put together a considerable quantity of information, adopted recommendations that have always been appreciated, and demonstrated its usefulness and relevance by developing items before negotiations begin on them. The proposals placed before it and the in-depth discussion to which these give rise have often brought forward ideas and contributed to greater clarity. Progress in this body has stimulated and continues to stimulate bilateral efforts and

will continue to influence the work of the Conference on Disarmament. With that conviction in mind, my delegation is committed to strengthening further the effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission, to preserving its usefulness in the multilateral disarmament process, through achieving balance in the items it considers — both nuclear and conventional items — and to taking up these items in a framework that makes it possible for all delegations to participate, through avoidance of all parallel meetings.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Allow me to express the satisfaction of my delegation at seeing you, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, chairing the Disarmament Commission. Your presence here, as well as that of your predecessor, Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia, testifies to the importance of disarmament for the international community.

We would also like to register our satisfaction with the renewed Department for Disarmament Affairs, which, under the wise guidance of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala, will undoubtedly play a major role in the revitalization of the disarmament efforts of the United Nations.

The 1998 session of the Disarmament Commission takes place at a moment of uncertainty in the disarmament arena, which is marked by opposite trends.

The international situation offers enormous opportunities for decisive progress towards the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and above all nuclear weapons. In this respect, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons embodies a growing awareness of the fact that such barbaric devices are losing whatever pretence of legitimacy they may have possessed in the past.

Once regarded as the cornerstones of major security alliances and the symbols of great-Power status, nuclear weapons are becoming no more than an expensive and dangerous nuisance. Everywhere, civil society has become aware of the high costs associated with the maintenance of such weapons and also questions their value as a military tool. Opinion polls taken by respected institutions in the nuclear-weapon States themselves detect overwhelming majorities in favour of negotiations for a global nuclear-weapon ban.

In fact, one can safely conclude that the battle for public opinion between supporters and opponents of nuclear weaponry has already been fought and won by the latter. The strong reaction of international public opinion against the last nuclear tests would no doubt be exponentially multiplied were any State ever to test again. The international standing of such a State would be greatly diminished in this case.

Several realistic proposals for the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons have been presented, such as those of the Canberra Commission and the Group of 21 in Geneva. There is near-unanimous support for the full implementation of the non-proliferation and disarmament obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the nuclear treaties — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We warmly welcome, in this context, the ratification of the CTBT by France and the United Kingdom.

There are, however, worrisome signs that the conceptual reliance on the maintenance of a nuclear arsenal persists in some countries. Despite the commitment to the CTBT by the five nuclear Powers, computer-aided modelling of nuclear explosions and the improvement of atomic explosive devices continue. Such actions may awaken or rekindle in non-nuclear-weapon States the desire to acquire nuclear weapons.

There is a keen international expectation that commitments made under article VI of the NPT, concerning complete nuclear disarmament, will be implemented. In taking the decision to join the NPT, Brazil is determined to join in the efforts to bring that provision into reality.

The multilateral disarmament machinery is in crisis. The symptoms of such a crisis have been with us for some time. The latest unqualified success for multilateral disarmament, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), dates from five years ago. After decades of international mobilization, the CTBT had to circumvent the consensus rule of the Conference on Disarmament in order to be adopted. A cumbersome entry-into-force clause may delay for an indefinite period the consolidation of its legal status, although at least the signatory States have already committed themselves not to conduct tests. And the whole process of negotiating the anti-personnel landmine Treaty took place outside the Conference on

Disarmament, even if it had the endorsement of the General Assembly.

Brazil subscribes to those two legal instruments — the CTBT and the anti-personnel landmine Treaty — and hopes for their early entry into force and progress towards universality. However, we should be able to resort to the multilateral machinery to express universally shared values in the field of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament has been plagued by stonewalling and has not done any substantive work since it left the draft of the CTBT in the hands of the General Assembly. For the first time since the end of the cold war, there is no major disarmament treaty in the pipeline.

The Brazilian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament expressed the view that the recent agreement on the programme of work represents the lowest common denominator — it is well below the expectations of the international community. Even if the Conference on Disarmament were to agree to the start of the negotiations on a fissile-material-ban treaty, this would represent, as the Canberra Commission stated, a reinforcing step, not a concrete measure of nuclear disarmament.

If the start of the concrete work of the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament is further delayed, we should remember that nothing prevents the five nuclear-weapon States from concluding among themselves an agreement on the cut-off of fissile-material production or from submitting their enrichment and reprocessing facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

However, progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world is a matter of concern not only for the nuclear-weapon States, but also for the entire international community. One of the concrete expressions of this fact is the movement towards the consolidation and extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this connection, the international community should encourage Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to conclude the treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia as soon as possible. The initiative of Mongolia to establish a single-country nuclear-weapon-free zone also deserves special attention. Other initiatives aimed at a nuclear-weapon-free world are certainly also welcome.

The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba already cover almost two thirds of the membership of the United Nations over more than half of the surface of the globe, including almost the entire southern hemisphere. There are crucial differences between membership in a nuclear-weapon-free zone and membership in only the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. In the case of the nuclear-weapon-free zones, the three most important differences are, first, more thorough procedures for clarification, consultation and verification, through regional mechanisms in addition to the IAEA; secondly, the non-acceptance of the stationing of foreign nuclear weapons in the territories covered by the zones; and thirdly, legally binding negative security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States. It is therefore evident that the nuclear-weapon-free zones represent, in the words of the Canberra Commission, part of the architecture that can usefully encourage and support a nuclear-weapon-free world. We expect the Disarmament Commission to develop further this principle under agenda item 4.

Under agenda item 5, the Disarmament Commission will again discuss the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). A well-prepared special session could go a long way towards preparing the United Nations to address the challenges of disarmament in a multipolar world. We look forward with great interest to the thoughts and suggestions of Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala on this issue.

As regards agenda item 6, on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace in the context of resolution 51/45 N, the Brazilian delegation will do its utmost to help ensure good progress during this session. We would like to point out, however, that many of the issues we will be discussing are not particularly relevant to disarmament, in that disarmament involves measures of arms reduction agreed upon among States in the areas of weapons of mass destruction and large conventional systems.

The discussion of item 6 of the agenda will involve issues such as post-conflict peace-building, the restoration of law and order in societies torn apart by internal conflict and criminal law as a tool for controlling small weapons. A particularly important initiative in this area was the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which was adopted by the Organization of American States on 13 November 1997. The text of the Convention will be circulated as a document of our meeting, at the request of the delegation of Mexico. It provides a

regional approach to the problem, which we feel could be a flexible and effective way of dealing with the subject.

Such measures in the area of conventional small arms are valuable on their own merits, but should not be considered as replacing or overtaking the disarmament agenda. The implication that we should concentrate on so-called concrete disarmament measures while giving up on weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and on major conventional disarmament, because such issues would be too difficult to tackle, does not do justice to the concrete progress that the international community has made over the last several decades in helping prevent dangers that are too horrible to countenance.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to extend warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau who have been elected to serve during this 1998 session of the Disarmament Commission. Allow me also to express the gratitude of my delegation to Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia for his exemplary guidance of our work at previous meetings.

This substantive session of the Disarmament Commission was preceded by two relevant events that surely foreshadow substantive progress in our work. On the one hand, we are beginning our work in an atmosphere of reform — and we congratulate the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Dhanapala, upon his appointment, and wish him the greatest success. On the other hand, the delegation of Argentina would like to take this opportunity to express its satisfaction to the delegations of the United Kingdom and of France for their countries' ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This is of particular relevance because they are the first nuclear-weapon States to ratify this essential instrument of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In recent years we have witnessed encouraging developments that tend to confirm that the world has changed far more than we perhaps realize or are ready to admit. However that may be, there can be no doubt that in the next millennium all of us will face a formidable challenge that we cannot ignore.

This challenge consists of developing a comprehensive view of collective security that includes, *inter alia*, sustained progress on disarmament issues, increasingly transparent positions and confidence-building and the inception of a multilateral process that will promote international cooperation with renewed vigour in order to clear the way towards development.

In view of the upcoming preparatory meeting for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we believe it useful to recall that the document adopted at the NPT Review and Extension Conference recognized once again the value of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the contribution they can make in strengthening international peace and security.

We were pleased to hear, at the beginning of this debate, that a considerable number of delegations continue to attach importance to the contents of that declaration. We hope that at the upcoming session of the First Committee a position that is consonant with this attitude will be adopted on the resolution on "The nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas". That resolution accurately reflects the principles and objectives contained in the NPT, it creates no new legal obligations, and it contravenes no provision of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Argentina encourages dialogue and cooperation among the member States of the various nuclear-weapon-free zones and on various occasions has offered to share the experience it has acquired in implementing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and through the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials as a new system for promoting confidence and equilibrium in the region.

Argentina believes that the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones requires comprehensive IAEA safeguards, the promotion of transparency in the monitoring of exports related to the peaceful use of nuclear weapons, and the adoption of domestic measures to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear weapons.

In continuing to comment on the challenge that lies ahead of us, we would note that another item is before our Committee for its consideration: the convening of another special session devoted to disarmament. We agree on the need for a new, forward-looking agenda. We believe also that in order to ensure that this session is productive it must take place in a consensus framework. A session of this kind requires careful preparation, including agreement on its objectives and an

agenda that is evenly balanced between nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament issues.

In the challenge to begin developing a comprehensive view of collective security, we must not fail to tackle the issues of conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular attention paid to peace-building. Argentina considers particularly auspicious the fact that this item is included on our agenda, and we believe that we must continue to make tangible progress on the basis of what we have already achieved.

At previous substantive sessions, concern was voiced about a possible overlap in the consideration of items that are before other United Nations bodies. While overlap must be avoided, we believe that we must also avoid working in isolation. In our view, the Disarmament Commission can benefit from the work of other groups while in turn contributing to their work.

We must move forward in building a safer and more integrated world. If we use an integrated approach, then the United Nations as a whole can respond to problems that are of concern to us all, such as disarmament and arms control.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the current session of the Disarmament Commission. I am convinced that under your able chairmanship the session will successfully conclude its discussion of the agenda items, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

My delegation is of the view that, in the field of international disarmament, the main emphasis should be placed on nuclear disarmament as a matter of priority and that nuclear disarmament can be effected only when it is oriented towards the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and the denuclearization of the whole world. Therefore, my delegation will take part with special interest in discussions on the item on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones represents one of the essential ways of realizing denuclearization throughout the world, as evidenced by positive moves towards that end in various parts of the world. Against this backdrop, it is all the more imperative for the Commission to further intensify deliberations on drafting guidelines of universal character for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this regard, it is important as a matter of course to clearly define the obligations of the parties in the region or regions concerned. It is equally important that nuclear-weapon States be obliged to provide support and legal assurances for the nuclear-weapon-free zones, since such zones are inconceivable without such assurances.

The importance of defining the obligations of nuclear-weapon States has been unanimously recognized by the nuclear-weapon States themselves, to say nothing of the non-nuclear-weapon States. Consequently, a consensus could be achieved on the issue of legal assurances by nuclear-weapon States once the Commission successfully drafts the objectives, principles and criteria relating to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Because the Korean peninsula remains the most tense hot spot, its denuclearization is much more urgent than that of any other region. That is why the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has made every sincere effort to that effect. However, the prospect of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula remains uncertain. Unfortunately, the issue of legal assurances by nuclear-weapon States for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula has been completely disregarded. If the Korean peninsula is to be denuclearized, the United States — a party directly responsible for peace and stability on the peninsula — should above all give legally assurances that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and rescind its commitment to provide a nuclear umbrella to South Korea, as it pledged in the joint statement issued in New York in June 1993 by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework concluded in Geneva in October 1994.

Contrary to its pledged support for a denuclearized Korean peninsula, the United States is in reality unwilling to take any legal steps. Such acts constitute a fundamental reason why the North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, signed in December 1991, has not yet been implemented.

The reluctance of the United States to renounce its commitment to providing a nuclear umbrella for South Korea and to make assurances of the non-use of nuclear weapons against the DPRK is motivated by its policy of maintaining the confrontational structure of the cold-war era on the Korean peninsula.

It is generally recognized that the cold war has completely ended throughout the world and that, accordingly, the trend of change in the power structure is being manifested in the United Nations disarmament debates. However, the Korean peninsula remains the only region where the confrontation and hostility of the cold-war era persist even today. Such an abnormal situation also has severe repercussions upon the deliberations on a series of disarmament issues in the United Nations. Because of such confrontation and hostility, the sincere efforts of the DPRK to move towards disarmament, in conformity with a positive post-cold-war trend, have been gravely challenged.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has serious concerns for its security under the constant military threat of the United States, has been compelled to bear the heavy burden of the arms race against its will. Just recently, the United States took advantage of the "Iraq crisis" to reinforce sophisticated modern military equipment in South Korea and then to reorganize its 8th Army, the nucleus of its forces in South Korea, into a field-army system.

In the presence of a huge, ever-increasing military build-up, who on Earth can dare to deny that the DPRK is the direct victim of such military adventures? In a situation such as that prevailing on the Korean peninsula, mere lip service to arms reduction and military confidence-building is nothing but a smokescreen to camouflage the real intention to pursue an arms race and can be construed only as part of ongoing attempts to disarm the Democratic People's Republic of Korea unilaterally.

In actual fact, military threat is incompatible with disarmament; similarly, the goal of disarmament cannot be achieved unless it is accompanied by the sincere willingness of all belligerent parties. The realization of both denuclearization and disarmament, which are of vital significance in ensuring durable peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, will absolutely depend on whether or not the confrontational structure of the cold-war era is dismantled in the region.

From this point of view, my delegation believes that the time has now come for the United Nations to take appropriate measures conducive to the dissolution of the confrontational relations of the cold-war era in the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Granovskiy (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation is pleased to welcome and congratulate the representative of Belarus, a State to which we are linked by very strong and historical ties of friendship, on his election to the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session. We are convinced that his ability and experience, including in the area of multilateral disarmament, will allow us successfully to pursue the work begun by his predecessors, which we hope will lead to very meaningful results. Of course, he can count on the willingness of our delegation to help him in every possible way in carrying out his weighty tasks.

I should also like to thank his predecessor, Ambassador García of Colombia, for his successful work at last year's session.

International life is becoming ever more clearly multipolar and disarmament is a part of that process. Multilateral disarmament forums are acquiring a new dimension and the disarmament agenda is becoming ever more saturated, covering new areas of the world and new types of armaments. A graphic example of this phenomenon are the questions to which answers must be sought at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

Allow me to share our approaches to the items under discussion. Russia advocates the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various areas of the world as an important factor in narrowing the geographic extent of the presence of nuclear weapons and in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is the optimal way to obtain additional security guarantees for non-nuclear countries. At present, approximately 100 non-nuclear States that participate in these zones have received guarantees, with legally binding force, against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this context, the regional aspect of the search for additional security guarantees on the basis of nuclear-weapon-free zones deserves our support.

In this respect, it is important that the agreements on nuclear-weapon-free zones be in accordance with generally recognized international criteria and guarantee fully the non-nuclear status of the regions they cover. Careful work will be required on the following issues: the precise definition of the zone's geographical configuration; the obligations of the States participants; and the conditions of its establishment, including prohibition of the transit of nuclear weapons through the territories it covers.

We support the approach whereby the establishment of a "classic" nuclear-weapon-free zone is accompanied by additional disarmament measures — for instance, that proposed by the countries of the Middle East, encompassing other types of weapons of mass destruction over and above nuclear weapons; or, as proposed by the Republic of Belarus, a non-nuclear area in Central and Eastern Europe accompanied by an obligation not to accumulate conventional weapons in the region.

Questions on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament require careful consideration. I believe that we have a consensus on the need for careful preparations for the special session, the convening of which will be significant only if it results in the adoption of a meaningful document based on contemporary realities.

We believe that the forum could achieve its objective if its main task is to try to impose not specific time-bound schedules for disarmament for individual countries, while leaving other countries as outside observers, but a reasonable balance between the range of problems related to weapons of mass destruction and questions linked to conventional weapons.

In recent years, a great deal of practical work has been done to reduce nuclear arsenals. START I and START II have been concluded and agreements have been reached on further, even deeper cuts in the future under START III. The involvement of other nuclear Powers in the negotiations on nuclear disarmament is also timely. In that context, I would draw attention to the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation on the drafting by the five nuclear States of a treaty on nuclear security and strategic stability, the conclusion of which would lay a solid foundation for solving a range of problems. It is precisely the experience in real disarmament that demonstrates that the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons are possible only through a gradual, phased evolution that preserves strategic stability.

I would also recall that a certain amount of time is needed to achieve bilateral agreements within the START process, to complete future negotiations among the Five, and to implement five-way agreements on future nuclear-weapons reductions. Only when we have gone through all these interim stages will it be possible, probably on a multilateral basis, to discuss the question of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Here a legitimate question arises: Is it really possible today to address seriously something that might not become a reality even in the first decade of the twenty-first century? That is why we believe that proposals to begin negotiations on a programme of nuclear disarmament within a specific time-frame are unrealistic.

Still, there are aspects of nuclear disarmament where conditions are ripe for undertaking meaningful negotiations. In our view, negotiations could begin immediately in the Conference on Disarmament on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

In our view, a major focus of a special session should be regional disarmament, along with the range of issues relating to formulating and refining an integrated strategy for international controls and for the relevant multilateral machinery.

Closely related to these issues is the third substantive item on our agenda: "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". We are pleased that it has been possible to deal with sometimes thorny questions of the limitation of conventional weapons in Europe in a constructive, non-confrontational way. We stress the importance of renewing the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and adapting it to new realities.

We consider that one of the disarmament issues on which the United Nations can play a leading role is the problem of landmines. Russia advocates the adoption of practical measures to prevent and manage armed conflicts as one of the most effective ways of combatting the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines. It goes without saying that the joint efforts of States involved in humanitarian demining should be stepped up; we are prepared to act together with the United Nations in this sphere.

But we cannot support a simplistic approach to this question; full responsibility cannot be placed upon producer countries, and the problem cannot be solved with the hasty stroke of a pen, almost entirely reflecting the views of one group of countries while ignoring the legitimate concerns of others. Past practice shows that the most effective approach is through concerted measures with specific implementation machinery.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you,

Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We convey our congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation further congratulates Ambassador Andelfo García on the fine way in which he guided the work of the Commission at its last session.

The Disarmament Commission is meeting in a good international climate. Some of its features are the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, progress on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and, even more important, measures — insufficient though they be to date — that have been adopted on the reduction of nuclear weapons. These are positive signs that should not be overlooked and that should be reflected in the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Nonetheless, the question of general and complete disarmament under effective international control continues to be of high priority in international relations. The Commission must therefore continue to carry out its fundamental jobs: encouraging negotiations on curbing the arms race in all its aspects; promoting the process of genuine disarmament on an internationally agreed basis; building confidence among States; and bringing about a relaxation of international tension. An essential aspect of this work is promoting appropriate verification measures that will be satisfactory to the States directly concerned.

We must not forget that peace and development are indivisible. It is essential therefore that our work should take account of the need to devote a major part of the resources freed by disarmament to the economic and social development of developing countries, and in particular to their scientific and technological progress.

The Commission's agenda contains three substantive items, to which special consideration was given at the last session: we can turn to the work that has been done as a point of reference and of departure.

The delegation of Ecuador has always supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Using the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) as an example, Ecuador views such zones as an effective means of strengthening peace and security among their member States and as a step towards general and complete disarmament — which means that nuclear-weapon States must respect the full scope and implications of the zones. Ecuador believes that there are three elements that must underlie the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones: the free will of the States of the region concerned; the special characteristics of each region, especially its geographic, political, economic, social and other conditions, because these must determine the modalities of the zone; and the need to define needed verification and control measures, without which the zones would exist only as theoretical declarations.

Here, my delegation supports the paper presented by the Chairman that appears in annex I of the report of the Disarmament Commission, document A/52/42. We lay special stress on the four points set out in paragraph 2 of that paper as elements that deserve to be taken into account in our discussions.

In line with the proposal made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Ecuador supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In that connection, it is encouraging that at its fifty-second session the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/38 F by consensus. We hope that consensus will be reached also on the objectives of a fourth special session. In general terms, we believe that the basic purpose should be to define future measures on disarmament and related security issues — in other words, to consider and assess the international situation in the context of the fundamental changes that have taken place on disarmament issues since the end of the cold war. If that is the central objective, it should be possible to prepare an agenda and define the items that would be addressed at a fourth special session. My delegation agrees also that it should be possible to move forward in considering the paper presented by the Chairman on this item at the last session, which is contained in annex II of the report to which I referred some moments ago.

On the question of conventional arms control/limitation, my delegation is concerned at the proliferation and spread of such weapons, which are murderous tools in the many confrontations now taking place all over the world.

Therefore, we maintain that measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional weapons must be considered. We have welcomed and supported without reservation the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which is in harmony

with the declaration of the American continent as a landmine-free zone.

On the other hand, we believe that it is necessary to promote compliance with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We maintain that regional disarmament needs to be supplemented by measures and initiatives for conventional disarmament on a global scale. We would also like to reiterate our concern about imbalances in arms among States in the same region, because these imbalances, far from promoting the greater security of the countries with the greater stocks, wind up increasing the insecurity of the whole region by provoking reckless arms races. This problem, which most affects the smaller States that have lesser military means, can be resolved only by means of regional disarmament agreements, on the grounds that these imbalances cause instability and insecurity.

On the understanding that guidelines in this regard cannot be mandatory, my delegation believes that the Commission should study concrete disarmament measures relevant to conflicts on the verge of settlement and conflicts that have recently ended and, therefore, to the prevention of the resumption of conflicts.

In accordance with resolution 52/40 B, in which the General Assembly recommended that the Disarmament Commission study mechanisms for improving its working methods, we must begin from the principle that the fundamental purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and that the Organization is the only universal forum in which all Member States contribute to the disarmament process. Accordingly, the United Nations must play a central role in the consideration and adoption of a comprehensive disarmament programme, taking into account the fact that this is the responsibility of all States.

Thus it must be reaffirmed that the Disarmament Commission, as a specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, has the role of facilitating substantive deliberations that can lead to the submission of concrete recommendations on specific disarmament issues. If this is the case, then it is necessary to promote appropriate coordination among the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament — bodies that, in one way or another, deal with similar issues.

It follows from this that one of the effective means of improving the working methods of the Commission would be to ensure that States become firmly convinced that no progress can be made on disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security if States do not strictly abide by the objectives of the Charter and by other generally accepted principles of international law. In this context it is indispensable for all due efforts to be made to ensure — by peaceful means exclusively — the just settlement of existing controversies, since they sustain tensions and suspicions and thus will frustrate all disarmament efforts.

Such a settlement will lead to the promotion of confidence-building measures in the political, military, economic, social, humanitarian and cultural spheres. The purpose of such measures must be to enhance peace and security and to contribute to the prevention of any kind of armed confrontation, threats of nuclear war in particular. Confidence-building must be directed towards reducing the dangers inherent in misunderstandings related to military activities, helping to prevent armed confrontation and covert preparations for aggression, and reducing the danger of surprise attacks and accidental outbreaks of war.

In sum, if we want the Commission to intensify and improve its working methods, we must call upon all States — particularly those with the largest nuclear arsenals which consequently have the greatest responsibility to promote nuclear disarmament — to give their political support to such measures, because without their support our recommendations will be in vain.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): Congratulations on your election, Sir, to the chair of the Disarmament Commission at this session. Please be assured that my delegation and also my colleague, Mr. Leslie Gumbi, who will be serving as one of the Vice-Chairmen, will work with you to ensure the success of our deliberations.

The South African Government firmly believes that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of non-nuclear-weapon States to the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. It is our conviction that the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba serve to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and encourage the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world. We in Africa are particularly proud of the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, and it is a pleasure for

me to announce to this Commission that South Africa deposited its instrument of ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, who is the depositary of the Treaty, on 27 March 1998. The Pelindaba Treaty, which had been an ideal since the 1960s, has, as of February this year, been signed by 49 African States, and the relevant protocols have been signed by all of the nuclear-weapon States.

We use this opportunity to again call on the only remaining State that has territory within the zone and has not yet signed and ratified the Treaty protocol that applies to it, to do so as soon as possible. We also call on all of the signatories to the Treaty and its protocols to ratify these instruments as soon as possible.

South Africa also welcomes the initiative of the States of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. The Almaty Declaration, in which Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan endorsed the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, provided the impetus for the holding of the international conference on this initiative in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, during September 1997, where the strategy for achieving this nuclear-weapon-free zone was deliberated. South Africa was pleased and honoured to have been a participant at that conference and will continue to support the resolute steps of the Central Asian States who are striving to build a safer region.

My delegation points to the initiative of the States of Central Asia as proof that the idea of cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones is not a lofty and unattainable ideal; it is a practical reality. Our delegation encourages all States to provide all support possible to the finalization of the establishment of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. The importance of this cooperation was captured by the President of Uzbekistan when he said that each nation in Central Asia is conscious of its own degree of responsibility for the region's destiny, that they do not ignore developments that are going on beyond Central Asia, and that they want to take part in the constructive process of world-building so as to hasten the time when people in all the corners of the world will have guaranteed security.

In this spirit of responsibility for one's destiny and in a bid to hasten guaranteed security for people in all corners of the world, my Government also renews its call for the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions where they do not exist, such as the Middle East and South Asia.

In this regard, at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the States parties reached general agreement on a number of points. Among these, they welcomed the steps taken since 1995 to conclude further nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and reaffirmed their conviction that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States concerned enhances global and regional peace and security. The parties recognized the importance attached by signatories and States parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok to establishing a mechanism for cooperation among the respective Treaty agencies.

A continuing concern for the cause of nuclear-weapon-free zones was shown by the vote on the resolution on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas at the fifty-first and fifty-second sessions of the General Assembly. South Africa will continue to work to achieve consensus on this important resolution.

On the subject of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), it will be recalled that the Non-Aligned Movement provided a constructive input on this issue so as to give it impetus. South Africa recalls the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/38 F, in which the Assembly decided, subject to the emergence of a consensus on the objectives and agenda, to convene its fourth special session on disarmament. It endorsed the recommendation of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 substantive session that the item entitled "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament" should be included in the Commission's agenda at its 1998 session and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", and, subject to the outcome of the deliberations at the 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, to set an exact date for and to decide on organizational matters relating to the convening of the special session.

As was the case last year, South Africa will, at this session, continue to play a constructive role in the firm conviction that consensus on the objectives of SSOD IV is essential to the convening of such a special session. We are also pleased that resolution 52/38 F was adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1997 without a

vote. Now that there is an international consensus to convene SSOD IV, we are in a position to cease concentrating on this debate, which had proved to be divisive, and to focus our attention on reaching agreement on the session's objectives and agenda.

It is not just the threat that is constituted by all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery that is of serious concern to my Government, but also the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence. We were therefore gratified at the progress at our 1997 session on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament. The progress achieved in this field is appropriate given the increasing attention to the issue of small arms by the international community and regional organizations, for example the Organization of American States. Conventional weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering in conflicts around the world today, and it is thus promising to see that a greater emphasis is beginning to be placed on conventional armaments in disarmament forums. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which are gained from various peace and democratization initiatives are curtailed by the proliferation of these arms and light weapons.

The magnitude of the problem is such that only through appropriate national, regional and international action can the effects of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, be curtailed. What is required is a political commitment from countries to address this issue as a priority.

Small arms proliferation, because of its links to criminal activities, political conflict and socio-economic problems, should not be addressed in isolation. Any measures taken will have to form part of those efforts aimed at curtailing other crimes. A holistic approach should be adopted to stem this proliferation problem. Regionally, political leaders should commit themselves to solving this problem through effective regional cooperation and security action, addressing the underlying demand factors such as criminal activities and socio-economic underdevelopment. In addition, countries should, in a transparent manner, exercise strict control over the transfer of conventional arms.

My delegation circulated a paper at the 1997 session of the Commission which provided further detail on the South African Government policy on and approach to conventional arms control. At this session we will be circulating a paper in Working Group III on the South African Government policy on transparency in armaments.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Commission at its 1998 substantive session. We are confident that your experience and your dedication in the field of disarmament will contribute to an objective outcome and that, during the session, we will be able to achieve what we all desire. We also extend our congratulations to other members of the Bureau. We should also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the former Chairman, Mr. García of Colombia, for his work during the previous session.

This year's session acquires very specific importance and significance in the wake of strengthening the United Nations Centre for Disarmament Affairs by renaming it the Department for Disarmament Affairs. We would also like to reaffirm that the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction must be the priorities of this Department. My delegation would like to extend its congratulations to Mr. Dhanapala on his appointment as Under-Secretary-General of the Department, and we wish him every success.

The Disarmament Commission is the negotiating forum of the General Assembly entrusted with disarmament. We support the work of this multilateral machinery, and we believe that within the Commission countries will be able to reach consensus, and that harmony can be achieved in the Working Groups to ensure a positive outcome that will have a wide-ranging impact on all areas of universal disarmament. In this context, my delegation would also like to support the practice of considering three items every three years, so that we can carefully study every item that is on the agenda of the Commission.

The three items on our agenda for this session demonstrate the great importance placed by the international community on their discussion. In this respect, allow me to refer to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, which states that the specific characteristics of nuclear weapons, particularly their destructive power, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come, render them potentially catastrophic. The Court also stated that the destructive

power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time, and that they have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. In addition, the advisory opinion found that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Syrian Arab Republic, on the basis of its policy of promoting international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and within a general perspective of complete and general disarmament, has spared no effort in supporting United Nations resolutions on disarmament.

In 1968, Syria became a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has since committed itself to the Treaty's system of guarantees. It has stated repeatedly that it supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as well as in other areas. Furthermore, at the 1989 Paris Conference on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Syria was the first to propose declaring the Middle East a region free from all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological, within the framework of the United Nations.

Our goal was to provide succeeding generations with a stable and secure world — a world in which people will not have to witness another dark period in the history of humankind like the one that saw nuclear weapons used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, the new and more technologically advanced nuclear weapons are more destructive and certain to cause even greater destruction.

Syria has always affirmed its keen interest in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We would like to reiterate our deep concern at the serious obstacle to the establishment of that region posed by Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT. Israel continues to refuse to accede to that Treaty in spite of the fact that all the countries in the Middle East have done so, leaving Israel alone a non-party to that Treaty. Israel continues to refuse to join, in spite of the fact that the international community has taken note repeatedly of the fact that this stubborn refusal is seriously harming the credibility and the universality of the NPT and is in practical terms preventing the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

How is it possible, then, to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East if Israel does not accede to the NPT? Israel is the only party that has yet to join the Treaty and the only party that is determined to maintain, increase and develop its nuclear arsenal.

How can we put an end to the nuclear arms race in the Middle East? How can we establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region when Israel, alone in the area, has a military nuclear programme that is outside the NPT's international regime? This programme represents a grave threat to the safety and security of the people of the area now and in the future.

Israel's position reveals its lack of seriousness and its attempts to evade United Nations efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region, in particular when it calls for sterile and useless unilateral negotiations with each and every country. Indeed, it is impossible to free any area in the world from nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction unless all parties agree on the mechanism to be used, their objective and their commitment.

Renouncing nuclear weapons is the true guarantee of international peace and security. We expect that the international community represented in this Commission, if it is serious about reaching a fruitful outcome at this session, will call on Israel to renounce the option of nuclear weapons and to start taking practical and serious steps to place its nuclear installations under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards for inspection, monitoring and control, and to accede to the NPT.

My country strongly supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) as an opportunity to review all aspects of disarmament in the context of the current international scenario and to draw the attention of the international community to the importance and necessity of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and reducing conventional weapons. We believe that the main priorities provided for in the Final Document of SSOD I continue to reflect a broad international consensus.

In keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, we call for the limitation of the production, stockpiling and development of conventional weapons, while taking into account the legitimate and inalienable rights of peoples to self-defence, resistance to foreign occupation and self-determination. Furthermore, the countries with the largest arsenals of weapons must work towards substantially reducing their production and

stockpiles of conventional weapons in order to promote international peace and security.

In this respect, I should like to refer to the special importance of transparency in the field of armaments. The present system and the present United Nations Register fall short of taking care of the concerns of the majority of Member States. Balance is required, but in order for it to be successful it must be comprehensive, and it must include information on not only the export of certain types of arms but also on the production, use and stockpiling of all types of weapons. This is the required and just level of transparency.

Finally, we wish you, Mr. Chairman, every success in conducting the 1998 substantive session. You can be assured of our full cooperation.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session. Your election is a tribute to your country and to you personally. In the same vein, I would like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their election. My delegation pledges full cooperation with you and the Bureau in our common endeavour to achieve concrete results on the issues on the agenda of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission.

The United Nations Charter has accorded the highest priority to the maintenance of international peace and security. The importance of the mandate of the Disarmament Commission cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. As a prerequisite for the attainment of international peace and security, general and complete disarmament must therefore be placed at the forefront of the endeavours of the United Nations.

Tanzania's position on nuclear disarmament has always been consistent. We attach the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament and call on nuclear-weapon States to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace has acquired increasing significance in the overall context of regional disarmament initiatives. Tanzania, a signatory to the Pelindaba Treaty, is guided by its conviction that such steps will strengthen regional peace and security and contribute to comprehensive efforts towards general and complete disarmament.

With regard to the item on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace, my delegation supports legitimate measures which are genuinely intended to regulate the transfer of small arms and light weapons. Consequently, any measure aimed at putting an end to the illicit arms trade will have our full support. Such measures, however, should not prejudice the transfer of small arms necessary for the security concerns of smaller nations, most of which maintain relatively low levels of armaments for their legitimate defence needs.

My delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to determine the future course of action in the field of disarmament and related security matters for the next millennium. Tanzania urges all States Members of the United Nations to coordinate their efforts in pursuing the objectives of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. My delegation remains optimistic that this session will reach a compromise on this item.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that this Commission provides the universal forum for charting out the best course and path towards our goals and objectives, as laid down in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Let us therefore all work together to advance the goals that we can collectively subscribe to in the search for international peace and security.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman: I interrupt the general exchange of views to resume some organizational business. As members know, we have yet to elect two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of African States, two from the Group of Asian States and one from the Group of Western European and Other States, as well as to select Chairmen for Working Groups II and III, on agenda items 5 and 6 respectively.

At this stage I am pleased to inform members that the Chairmen of the respective regional groups have communicated to me that the Group of African States nominates Algeria and South Africa for the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1998. The Group of Asian States nominates Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic for the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Commission. The

Group of Western European and other States nominates Luxembourg for the post of Vice-Chairman.

Accordingly, if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation the representatives of Algeria, South Africa, Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Luxembourg as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: With regard to the chairmanships of the Working Groups, I am pleased to inform the Commission that the Chairman of the Group of Asian States has communicated to me that the Group has a nomination for the post of Chairman of Working Group II on agenda item 5, "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament". At this juncture I would like to give the floor to the representative of India for the presentation of the Asian candidate.

Ms. Kunadi (India): Since I am taking the floor for the first time, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. Of course I will have an opportunity to congratulate you more formally in my statement this afternoon.

As a result of consultations in the Asian Group, I am pleased to inform you that the Asian Group has agreed by consensus to nominate Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia, for the chairmanship of Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission for the 1998 session.

It will be recalled that Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat also chaired Working Group II during the last session, and we feel that his reappointment would provide continuity to the work of that group.

The Chairman: Thus, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, the representative of Indonesia, has been nominated for the post of Chairman of Working Group II on agenda item 5.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to appoint Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat as the Chairman of Working Group II.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have also been informed that the Group of African States has a nomination for the post of Chairman of Working Group III, on agenda item 6, concerning conventional weapons.

To present the nominee from the Group of African States, I call on the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. N'Gam (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor, allow me to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Commission.

The African Group has decided by consensus to nominate the Permanent Representative of Uganda for the Chairmanship of Working Group III, on agenda item 6, concerning conventional weapons.

The Chairman: Thus, the Ambassador of Uganda, Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, has been nominated for the post of Chairman of Working Group III, on agenda item 6.

If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission wishes to appoint Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka as Chairman of Working Group III.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: May I, on behalf of the members of the Commission, extend warm congratulations to all the elected officers and wish them, especially the Chairmen of the Working Groups, luck in discharging their difficult duties.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.